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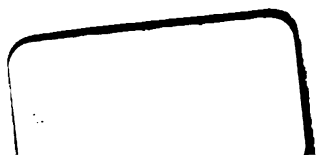
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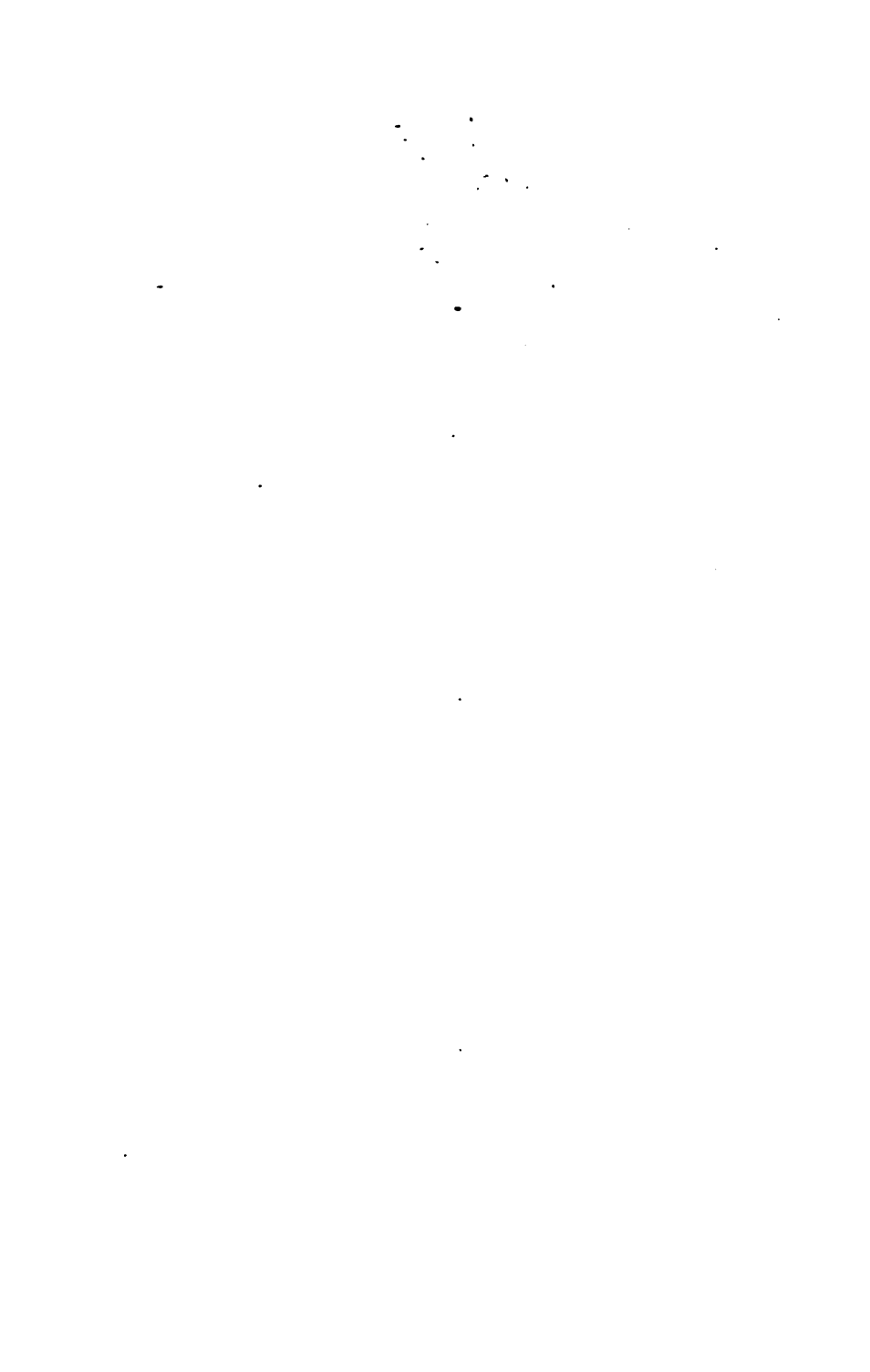
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COUNT KÖNIGSMARK:

An Historical Romance

BY

CAPTAIN CHAMIER, R.N.

AUTHOR OF

"THE LIFE OF A SAILOR," "HEN BRACE," "JACK ADAMS,"
ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1845.



PREFACE.

COUNT ROSEN suggested the story of Konigsmark to me, as one of great interest, and which might, by blending historical facts with some imaginary scenes, make an interesting novel. He recommended to me the Life as given in the English "Causes Célèbres," and I immediately took that book as my pilot. I am here proud to acknowledge the information I received from that work, and own how very far inferior my pages appear in comparison with the racy writing of the author of that excellent compilation.

The account of the Lapland witches has been gleaned from several authors of great

repute, and the description of their ceremonies put together with great care.

The strange story of the ring does not belong to the Konigsmark family, but to the Barnekows. The ring was acquired in the manner here described; and when, in the riots occasioned by Ankerstrom's murder of his sovereign, the owner of this ring was killed by the populace—the ring which he had never been able to take from his hand, could not be found after his death.

I am quite aware that, in this age, the story of a ghost may be charged with puerility. But there is not a Swede who is not conversant with the anecdote of Barnekow's ring; and I leave the sceptical to laugh at the credulous, merely adding, with Dr. Johnson, that concerning ghosts, *appearances* are much in their favour.

THE AUTHOR.

July, 1845.

COUNT KÖNIGSMARK.

CHAPTER I.

“ And be these juggling fiends no more believed,
That palter with us in a double sense ;
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope.”

MACBETH, Act v. Scene 7.

“ It is of little use our discussing the question. I tell you, from the age of ten I have read book upon book ; I have studied the subject ; I have consulted the opinions of learned and of pious men, and I believe in witchcraft. You sneer—but you do not convince me of my error. And, although ridicule is the test of truth, still my arguments remain unshaken.”

“How is it possible, my master, without at once acknowledging these Lapland witches to be of a superior class of mortals—to be gifted with supernatural power—and to be enabled to call to their aid powers either of darkness or of light—how is it possible to credit such absurdities?”

“Absurdities, Vratz! Look at the prosecutions carried on daily in England against these witches. Have they not witchfinders? Do not their judges, men famed for their incorruptibility, preside at trials, and condemn them from their own mouths? Would these beings, knowing the dreadful death which awaited them, persevere in declaring themselves gifted with this supernatural power, and thus court the flame and the stake, if, by declaring themselves innocent, and submitting to the trial, they could evade the worst, the most horrible death human nature in its most savage humour ever imagined?”

“What trial?—what proof could convict a witch? Your very arguments are strongest against yourself; and common reason would suggest a flight of a few thousand miles upon



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“And I should like to know, if you had a raw anywhere, and I squeezed it, if blood would not follow! and as for the light weight of the witch, or her bad memory or terror at her trial, which made her hesitate at the Lord’s Prayer, I see nothing astounding. I doubt very much, if I were going to be grilled for the amusement of the public, if I could say the Lord’s Prayer without very considerable hesitation.”

“Ridicule it as you like, can you gainsay it? Was it not proved that a witch could only shed three tears from her left eye, and none from her right eye? and was not this considered by the witch-finders and the judges a substantial proof? and have not thousands been present at the swimming of a witch, and been satisfied?”

“Ah, that,” said Vratz, “is above me. I never heard of swimming a witch, excepting in a sieve, and then, as the English poet says, they jogged along ‘like rats without a tail.’ ”

“I assure you,” said Konigsmark, “that it was a popular ordeal, witnessed by hundreds.



and anon to sweep the room, and if they saw any spiders or flies, to kill them."

"They might have left the spiders to kill the flies," said Vratz, interrupting Konigsmark, "and killed the spiders afterwards; it would have saved some trouble."

"If they could not kill them," continued Konigsmark, "then they were known to be imps. Nay, so accurately has this subject been investigated, that it is ascertained beyond a doubt that witches rarely confessed but on a Friday; and that every hair was obliged to be shaved from their bodies, or imps concealed themselves, and rendered the dam obdurate and silent. Nay, when the first writers against witchcraft were stigmatized as atheists, though they only attempted to prove the imbecility of persons accused, and the infatuation or the knavery of the accusers, did not Bodinus, a French lawyer, in his *Demonomania*, urge the confession of witches themselves as overthrowing all arguments; and did not Wierus, Larchemar, Godelman, and Ewichius, join all their talents to make witchcraft intelligible?"

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An Historical Romance

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CAPTAIN CHAMIER, R.N.

AUTHOR OF

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1845.

enough of this dreary waste and villanous cold, I beg with all submission to ask of you, the mad guide I have so foolishly followed, where we are to make acquaintance with your ugly friends?"

"We are close to the island, and already the deep shades of evening have obscured the treacherous path. There is hard by here a hut, built by the witches for those who come to consult them. Can you doubt such people? Does not the word Lappi, in the Finnish language, mean sorcerer?* although it is uncertain if the name of the art comes from the name of the people; but it is incontestable that no nation has been more famous than the Laplanders for the exercise of that art, in which I for one most religiously believe."

"Perhaps if you said most irreligiously, the term would be more appropriate. Yonder, upon my soul, stands a hut, and as I am very fatigued, not only with the subject, but with carrying our sustenance, which I trust none of the blood-sucking imps will make free with, I propose we stay all further arguments until

* Recherches de Mons. Porthan.

we have stayed our appetites ; and the sooner we get under shelter from this snow storm the better."

" I feel neither cold nor heat," replied Konigsmark. " I am destined to make some figure in this world beyond the general run of mankind, and until I have fathomed my destiny, I care not to eat or to drink. See, the hut is close; there is the pile of wood, and within we shall find all the necessaries for lighting a fire and cooking our meal. On that island the witches reside, and we are now in their power; for, according to all accounts, whatever is raised by their hands, or stands within the circle which they occupy, becomes subject to their power."

" I care very little for their circle or their power," said Vratz; " but I hate snow, and dislike fasting; nothing ever alarmed me in my life but hunger; I would face a regiment of witches mounted on broomsticks. I remember reading in some childish book that these hags gave themselves up to the devil, body and soul, the devil engaging, on his part, as one of the high contracting powers, that he

would avenge them on all their enemies—give them an imp or familiar spirit to be ready at all calls, and to do whatever was directed; and by such assistance the hag becomes enabled to mount her broomstick and attend the general meetings of the sisterhood, at which, of course, as granter of the powers conferred, the devil always presides. So, my dear master—not that I care one straw about the devil or the witches myself—I think it right to bring to your memory that you have, without force or compulsion, crossed the boundary, and voluntarily placed yourself, according to your own idea, under the power, guidance, and protection of the devil.”

As Vratz finished this specimen of lore on the subject of witches, he entered the tent without any alarm, took off his knapsack, in which the provisions and raiment were carefully packed, and sitting down on the dried lichen which covered the ground, and which appeared to have been mowed, so evenly had it grown, and so soft did it feel to the tread, he began to strike a light and prepare

a fire. During all this time a certain degree of fear had overcome Konigsmark, for he believed in the power of the witches, and became alarmed in proportion as he placed himself more under their protection, or in their power; and although he ventured into one of their huts, he seemed very anxious to avoid during the night, any intercourse with his future acquaintances.

"Give me the old horseshoe, Vratz," said Konigsmark; "you will find it in the doublet."

"Oh, certainly," rejoined his bold companion; "and I hope it will keep your friends out until after supper. What an insignificant idea you must have of the power of witches, if you suppose a horseshoe can keep them out."

Having carefully hung up this guard against all ingress on the part of the witches, Konigsmark entered the tent, and divesting himself of his snow-covered cloak, he threw himself carelessly on the lichen, on which travellers have reposed as on a bed,* and in silence watched the progress of the cookery, and

* Acerbi's Travels.

listened to the remarks of his friend, whose character is best gleaned from his observations.

“Pleasant work for a man who is obliged to follow his master. Here am I, a retainer in the service of Count Konigsmark, obliged to cook his dinner in a hut built by witches, or perhaps by the black gentleman himself! Now these witches have the power to transform themselves into cats, and inflict diseases, and they sometimes come in as fleas, flies, or spiders; if I find any one of these insects here, in this cold weather, I shall be apt to change my opinion, for nobody ever yet saw a fly in a Lapland winter. Then comes the Count, only eighteen years of age, and bothers me with the wisdom of our ancestors. ‘The belief,’ he says, ‘that certain persons were endowed with supernatural power, and that they were assisted by invisible spirits, is very ancient. The augurs of the Romans were sorcerers, and those are only the lieutenant-generals of witches, or superior officers from long standing; for it is evident a witch could only have existed since the introduction of Christianity,

as the heathens had no knowledge of a Christian devil; so putting this and that together, I have not the slightest doubt but that I am much nearer the devil than ever I wished to be, and very likely to have a witch dipping a long spoon into our soup. I know, if the old adage is true, that 'a man ought to have a long spoon to take soup with the devil,' and if his majesty is here, I shall be apt to burn my mouth. Now, Count."

Konigsmark took a small bowl of the soup, and cautiously sprinkled, three times, some salt therein; he made no remark, but ate in silence, whilst his companion devoured the bread and the broth, and seemed, now that his hunger was appeased, to be quite free from any alarm of an invasion; he handed the brandy-bottle and horn first to his master, who made a sign of the cross on the bottom of the horn before he poured any of the spirit therein, and having drained the last drop, handed it back to Vratz, who, having observed this superstitious proceeding, smiled as he filled the horn, and remarked that he should very much like to see the witch who would drink his brandy; but as he raised the

horn to his mouth, the tent was drawn aside and a man appeared. "You are no witch," said Vratz, "or the horseshoe would have fallen upon you;" and without betraying the smallest fear, he drained the last drop.

Konigsmark started to his feet, and grasped his sword, whilst Vratz, having finished his brandy, stood up and eyed the stranger; then turning to his master, remarked, with much coolness, that he had never seen such a little, ugly monster in his life, or one less to be dreaded.

CHAPTER II.

"Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution, thanks ;
Thou hast harp'd my fears aright."

MACBETH, Act iv. Scene 1.

THE stranger who for one second only had checked the draught of Vratz was of diminutive size, scarcely exceeding four feet in height. His features were disgustingly ugly ; his head seemed far too big for his body ; the eyes were dark, deep-seated, and narrow ; the cheek-bones high ; the mouth wide and unsightly ; the lips thick as a negro's, and the complexion swarthy and unwholesome ; his hair was cut short, and his dress was of the commonest

kind. On seeing the tent inhabited, the stranger looked astonished ; but without making any remark, he sat down by the fire, and taking the spoon which Vratz had relinquished, began very unceremoniously to help himself.

“ ’Tis the custom of the country,” said Konigsmark, as his flushed cheek gradually lost its colour. “ The whole population are small, and hospitality is taken, not solicited. He is a harmless man, but frightfully ugly, and his presence most unwelcome.” Konigsmark spoke in Swedish, to which country both he and Vratz belonged, and which it was evident was not understood by the stranger. “ Speak to him, Vratz, in his own language, and be civil.”

“ Well, little man,” said Vratz, in the Finnish tongue, “ where do you come from? You don’t carry your provisions with you; and you seem like a double-nosed dog, able to scent out the only food within many a mile.”

The stranger, in a voice resembling a deep growl, answered, “ That in his country, whatever one possessed, was shared by the stranger. I come,” said he, “ from the Sacred

Island, which stands on the Torneatrask, the large lake on the borders of which you found this hut."

"It is the place whither I am going," said Konigsmark, deeply interested. "I thought the inhabitants never left the island, but, in the deep seclusion of solitude, devoted their lives to the study of magic."

"You are right," replied the stranger. "A wish to know my destiny took me to the island. I am returned; and oh! how miserable a fate is it to know that inevitable misfortune comes nearer to us with each second!"

"It does not seem to take away your appetite, little man," said Vratz. "And this comes of your wishing to know when you are to be hung, of which inevitable fate you might as well have remained in ignorance, until the executioner put the rope round your neck. The subject's a ticklish one. How preciously pale you have become."

"Avoid the knowledge of your destiny," said the stranger; "for if it be fortunate, every moment seems an age until the period

arrives, and life is wasted in anticipations. If, like mine, your future years are to be passed in wretchedness, until a fearful death in a strange land is to end your woes, no pleasure can soothe, no intoxication lull to sleep the vision of the days to come."

"All weak minds," said Vratz, "are superstitious, and invariably run into extremes; and I presume, little man, you are just as weak in mind as you are stunted in growth. I never pay compliments, and therefore do not be much annoyed at my words; but I can tell you how to avoid your destiny, and prove all these witches, sorcerers, or the devil himself, wrong and ignorant."

"How?" asked the stranger, with much energy.

"Hang yourself before your time. I'll trouble you for that horn. You are a fool to believe that these people can dive into predestination—that they can unrol the book of life and death, and tell the fate of the eight hundred millions of people who walk upon the earth; but if you can stop my master from making as great a fool of himself as you have

made of yours, I shall consider myself your debtor, and be happy to contribute to chase away your fears by the assistance of another bottle of brandy, which I cautiously put up for fear one should leak out."

"Have you no belief in these people? Can all the world be in error? and have the stories of the magi of old been merely in the imaginations of men?"

"I suspect, little man, you are no Laplander; your accent and your wisdom betray you. Of what country are you? for, although like the Finns, you are yet a foreigner."

"I am a Polander; my history would little interest you. I have lived long amongst these people, and in a rash moment, wishing to know if ever I should revisit my country again, I have learnt more than I wished; urged on by insatiable curiosity, I provoked the knowledge which I now regret."

"And your name?" asked Vratz.

"Borosky," replied the stranger. "One fit for any deed, since the more cruel the act, the more certain am I to meet my fate, which now the sooner it comes the better. The

night is far advanced; let me seek some repose, and I hope my dreams may not babble my secret."

The stranger threw himself upon the soft bed formed by the lichen. Konigsmark had already fallen asleep; and Vratz having bestowed the compliment of "a pair of fools" upon his companions, closed the tent carefully, and wrapping himself up in his cloak, soon fell into a profound sleep.

In the morning the stranger had departed, and had quite deceived the expectations of Vratz, who, being sure his little friend was destined to be hung, was surprised he had not made his first step towards the gallows by committing a theft. Konigsmark was also absent. Vratz, in his usual careless manner, little heeded this; but blowing the embers of the almost-extinguished fire, began to think of breakfast, and prepared his stomach for its reception by fortifying it with a horn of brandy, which having drunk, he looked out of the tent for his master, and not seeing him, he sat quietly down, and settled in his own mind that Borosky was nothing more nor less

than the devil in disguise, and that Count Charles John Konigsmark had gone out to make the best bargain he could for his soul. Having come to this conclusion, and that he himself would ride home again upon a broomstick without any locomotive trouble, he ate some dried salmon, and fell asleep again.

It was at the first dawn of day that Konigsmark rose from his rude bed. Borosky was awake; his fears kept him sleepless. Both arose together; and Konigsmark, beckoning Borosky to follow him, left the tent. He began by making himself intelligible by dumb show; but the Polander told him he understood his language, and that caution had kept him from appearing to comprehend Vratz's strange remark at his entrance.

"Where is the place?" said Konigsmark.

"Yonder," said Borosky, "is the River Tornea; it flows from the large lake Torneatrask, and forms that grand cataract called the Darra. Look yonder and remark the iris, which the rays of the rising sun lifts into heaven, as the spray is driven by the wind. Between the cataract and the river

you see a small island; reach but that island, and you have no more to learn from me. But beware! it is beset with dangers and difficulties; the strong currents rush over the hidden rocks, and in the whirlpools formed by the many eddies lies the great difficulty of your voyage. Keep on to yonder stunted fir, which has struck its roots into the rocks, and seems to defy the ravages of the storm or the power of the lightning. I fastened the boat to its trunk last evening, and no one dares to use that boat but those who seek their destiny. And remember that all your strength will be required at the last moment, for the waters seem to rise up against the unnatural desire of diving into futurity, and rush round the shores with a fearful force and noise, as if to scare you from your determination. No bird was ever seen to dip its wings in the lake, nor has any one hitherto been bold enough to tempt the fish from their deep retreat. I have shewn you the island; I have prepared you for the only dangers; but once more let me warn you, as a friend, from seeking to pierce into futurity. Rest contented

with the knowledge each day affords, and let hope, the greatest blessing of God to man, still cheer you to the last; nor cast aside its cheerful influence by a knowledge which renders it powerless, leaves nothing to the imagination, chills every blossom of apparent expectation, crushes the risings of ambition, and destroys even the blessings of friendship and the endearments of love. Let me entreat you to return, nor seek to know your fate. You are too young, of high birth, evidently, from your dress, enjoying the blessings of this life. Seek not to ruin your hopes or blight your prospects."

"I answer with the great poet of the world," said Konigsmark—

"'Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution, thanks.'

We shall meet again. I have preserved your name. Farewell; my resolution is fixed; unalterable. Before the sun has set, I will know my destiny. Once more, my thanks. Farewell!"

CHAPTER III.

"How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags,
What is't you do?"

MACBETH, Act iv.

THE country surrounding the Torneatrask is as wild as the inhabitants, but far more grand and imposing. Throughout this part of Lapland the men are extremely diminutive and ugly; and the description of Borosky, as given in the preceding chapter, although that of a Pole, may be taken as a specimen of the population. High jutting mountains rear their heads around this lake; the approach to its shores is rugged and undefined; the whole district has a wild and

savage appearance. Here no arts flourish; no husbandman tills the ungrateful soil; no abodes of wealth are seen; but the whole aspect of the country is barren, dreary, and desolate, as it may be supposed to have been left when the mighty waters receded from it after the great deluge.

In vain had the advice of Borosky been offered. Konigsmark's mind was predetermined; superstition had early taken root in him; and so blindly did he follow its impulse, so resolutely did he shut out the light of reason, that the remark of Skjoldebrand seemed written alone for him,—“*Le principe de toute superstition est, que pour bien voir, il faut fermer les yeux, et que pour bien penser, il faut enchaîner la raison.*” Konigsmark had read of witches until he believed in their power, but he never called to his aid the arguments of reason to overthrow the insignificant evidence on which his belief was grounded.

He watched Borosky until a sudden turn in the narrow path shut him from the sight; then drawing his sword, he examined the

blade; his pistols underwent the same inspection; and lastly, a knife used by hunters, which in those days was carried near the knee, and secured much in the same manner as the Mexicans to this hour preserve the weapon, to cut a lasso which may be thrown over them. Winding up his courage—for superstition is always timid—the young Swede walked resolutely towards the fir-tree. The snow had fallen much during the night, and his were the first human feet which left their impress on the spotless way. Far on the right was the tent; before him appeared a barrier of rocks; to the left was the wide lake, and the Darra; whilst behind him a chain of rugged mountains seemed to enclose the magical district. On arriving at the fir-tree, he found the boat, and jumping suddenly in, as if to avoid the slightest parley with his fears, he cast her off, and pushed into the stream. The island appeared in the distance, low and flat, with the exception of one mountain, exactly in the centre. It was covered with pine trees, which in spite of the snow shewed their hardy and unchanged trunks.

For a time, Konigsmark made great progress; but he soon became aware that he was being swept by the current round the island. To obviate this, he changed his direction, and kept his eye upon the fir-tree, to see whether by allowing the current to take him on the bow, he maintained his position whilst the rush of water drifted him across the lake. He remembered the counsel of Borosky, and was sparing of his energy, until the bubbling tide seemed to hold him at the same distance from the island; he then used his utmost strength, and forcing the boat through the stream, she touched the shore.

It is only a superstitious mind which can comprehend the feeling with which he landed on the island, dedicated solely to the study of magic. On this spot no human being resided but those who had mastered the dark art; and if these people were associates of an evil spirit, and through him endowed with supernatural power, or if they were souls sold and damned for the knowledge they had obtained; or if, in seeking out his destiny, he was doomed to behold unearthly objects and

beings of another world, he cared not to inquire. The bandage of superstition obscured his vision, whilst the courage of the fanatic urged him forward. He secured the boat to a small rock, which formed one of the many shelters to the little cove in which he had landed; and giving one look towards the tent, he placed his hand on his sword, and resolutely advanced in his search. Not a sound disturbed the air, and the slight breeze which had ruffled the lake, and which rendered his progress to the island more difficult, seemed to have died into an unnatural calm as soon as he had landed. No bird screamed as it dived for its prey; there was an awful, solemn stillness, which struck a chill upon his heart.

On leaving the shore, he followed a narrow path which seemed cut with as many turnings as the Cretan labyrinth; the dark green of the fir looked sombre and dismal, when contrasted with the snow on the ground; and often and often Konigsmark turned to observe the marked path he had trodden, and which would serve to guide him on his return.

Suddenly he came upon a statue—it was

evidently an idol—it stood about the height of a man, horrible in form, rudely carved, and of a disgusting character. From this idol ran in a circular direction a deep trench, as if to mark that all within was holy ground; to the right and on the same line, stood another statue, and beyond that, again, another and another. They were the five statues reared to the god Seita, his wife, his sons, and his daughter. Konigsmark stopped to examine this strange figure; it was meant to imitate the human form in horrible distortion; and yet, with all the writhings of agony well imagined, the sculptor had made even pain ridiculous by placing a kind of hat upon the god. “Strange worship,” said Konigsmark, as he surveyed the idol; “and yet a hundred-fold more worthy of adoration than the little god Thor, which is preserved at Upsala, and which, independently of its ridiculous appearance, is so diminutive and so insignificant, that one wonders the giant mind of man could ever bow before this miserable representation of nothing earthly, cut from a small piece of wood. Those who worship these statues,” he continued, “are in all the

horrible darkness of paganism, and yet I, a Christian in creed, come here to ask my destiny—believing that by some agency unknown to us of more extended information, these heathens have acquired a supernatural power! Pshaw! Vratz was right; I am enthusiastic, superstitious, and I will avail myself of this dawn of reason to retrace my steps and abandon my project."

As these thoughts were passing in Konigsmark's mind, and he was on the point of departure, a low, plaintive voice, which with a soft and graceful melody seemed to blend an earnest and impressive prayer, came upon his ear with all the sweet intonation of music before the air has been disturbed by other sounds. It was like the notes from a well-filled flute at the first dawn of day, mellowed by the water on which it is played; the tone was clear, distinct, melodious, and beautiful. It arrested his thoughts, and his eyes were turned in the direction of the sound, which came from an invisible being. So sweetly beautiful was that voice, in all the silvery intonation of youth, that, with the curiosity which prompted his

every action, Konigsmark leaped across the trench, in order to fathom the mystery. A scream seemed uttered as his noiseless footstep fell upon the snow. A loud sound, as if from a drum, succeeded, and before him stood a tall, powerful man.

With all the eager impetuosity of youth, Konigsmark drew his sword; but the placid countenance of the stranger reassured him, and, as if ashamed of his fears, he forced the weapon back in its scabbard and followed the figure, which beckoned him forward, and which had already assumed over him the power which those who come prepared to believe in magic ever feel in the presence of the magician. Konigsmark followed: his heart beat quicker, but the heart of a Konigsmark never fluttered with fear, nor was a blanched cheek, or pale, bloodless lip the character of the family from which he was descended. "I have begun," he said to himself, "and if it lead me to the chasm of hell, and jump down it, I will follow, to hear again that voice—that sweet, melodious, strain—I would brave a greater danger than attending

the council at which yon being's master presides."

Passing through a high cluster of trees, Konigsmark found himself suddenly upon a smooth bed of lichen, a thick, soft moss which covers the ground, of a pale yellow colour. On this spot there was not a vestige of snow; the trees formed the background to a raised circular mound; and the regularity of the lichen, and the uniform manner in which it grew, gave it the appearance of a huge carpet. In the centre stood a kind of altar, and near this were raised several seats covered with dry fern. Being directed by his guide to the lowest of these, Konigsmark obeyed the intimation, and seated himself.

"You come to know your destiny?" said the stranger. "You have not been forced to this step; you come voluntarily; and it is by your own free will alone that you are prompted?"

"Even so," replied Konigsmark; "but before I call upon you to draw aside the veil of futurity, and unfold the ills or blessings which are to make my life dreary or happy, I

would ask whence you derive the power to do so? what statue is this? and where I may find the bright being whose melodious voice still strikes upon my ear?"

"When the charm is prepared, a vision will pass before me; that will be your life. We derive our authority and power—for we are many—from Odin; and you will find in the Edda, that his revelations, during the state of his magical exhaustion, were the same as ours. This altar is the place where the charm is begun. And if, after what I unfold, you are still curious to pursue your destiny, the voice which has thrilled your soul may yet be heard again."

"Proceed," said Konigsmark, "my soul's on fire. I care not what I hear, so that I see the person from whom that voice came. What am I to do?"

"Listen, and be silent. Observe—yet fear not. Come."

At this command, six other persons, all dressed exactly like the one who had been Konigsmark's guide, came into the circle, and he then remarked that every place was occupied.

The faces of all were covered so closely that not a feature was discernible, and each took his seat, holding both hands firmly clasped together, and raised above his head. In this position they remained, whilst their leader walked round the altar seven times, at the conclusion of which he drew from the base a kind of drum; upon producing it, the six raised one sudden ejaculation—a sharp single sound; and then, releasing their hands, held down their heads, as if afraid to gaze upon this sacred instrument.

With a curiosity strongly excited, and a mind prepared for the marvellous, yet still without the slightest fear, excepting always that curious, undefinable creeping which comes over us on witnessing any ceremony said to be religious, Konigsmark examined the drum. It appeared to be made of pine,* or fir split in the middle, and hollowed on the flat side, where the drum was made. The hollow was of an oval figure, and was covered with a skin

* See Witchcraft: "Encyclopædia Britannica;" and the "Voyage Pittoresque au Cap Nord," par Skjoldebrand.

clean dressed and painted with figures of various kinds, such as stars, suns and moons, animals, plants, countries, lakes, and rivers. The acts and sufferings of the Saviour and his apostles were depicted. All the figures were separated by lines into three regions, or clusters. Besides these multitudinous drawings, Konigsmark observed a kind of index, over which was a large hammer. The index appeared to be a bundle of brass and iron rings, to the largest of which the others were appended. The hammer was made of the horn of a reindeer, and both drum and hammer, the former of which more resembled a tambourine, were placed with great care at the foot of the altar.

No sooner was this done, than one of the seven men arose, and made all manner of extravagant contortions; he twisted his body into incredible and disgusting attitudes; he leaped in the air, shouted, and kicked, until Konigsmark smiled, and almost repented of not having forced Vratz to accompany him. Instantly another and another arose, until the last man, he who presided at the drum, placed

the hammer in Konigsmark's hand, and bid him strike it hard seven times, waiting about seven seconds between each stroke, and making the seventh the hardest of all.

At the first stroke, the whole seven magicians broke into a wild, but not unmusical song. It appeared an invocation to their gods, according to the several degrees of power they were believed to possess. Konigsmark heard the deity Beivi, or the sun, (a god, according to Grotius, very unjust to them, as, for many months, he is almost unseen or unfelt by the Laplanders,) invoked. At the second sound, the Saivo Olmak, or gods of the mountain, supposed to be oracular, were supplicated. At the third, Radien, who dwells in the starry heavens, was called; and to each beat, a new divinity was named; until, at the seventh, Horangalis, or the Thunderer, was shouted, and the seven magicians fell on their faces; the hammer fell from Konigsmark's hand, and, as a death-like silence succeeded the loud scream to the god, he felt a creeping fear come over him, his breathing became short, and with a noiseless step—for that magnifi-

cent carpet of lichen, thick, soft, and regular, rendered a footstep inaudible—he shrank from the altar, and sat down upon the place formerly allotted to him.

The seven magicians now rose simultaneously, and surrounded the magical drum; the rings marked the progress of Konigsmark's life; every state, or station, or danger, or pleasure seemed watched with intense anxiety, until the last was examined; then each voice was raised in a song to the *Saivo Olmak*. A wild dance succeeded; the same horrible contortions and convolutions followed, until, fatigued with the exertion, the seven beings fell prostrate on the earth, and in this state of exhaustion, a dream of the future life of Konigsmark passed before them. The sweet voice which had lured him to the desperate leap across the sacred confines of the place now faintly warbled—

“ Open now thine eager ears,
Banish hope, and banish fears.
Hark! they weave the web of life,
Scenes of pleasure, scenes of strife.
Whatso'er thy fate may be,
Listen to thy destiny.”

With ears as attentive as those of the watch-

dog, which is sensible of a strange footfall, did Konigsmark listen to his fate. The high priest of these mysteries, after having again and again thrown himself into every fantastic position, fell down, apparently fainting, whilst the vision of Konigsmark's life passed rapidly before him, and was as rapidly conveyed to the inquirer. As each scene of strife, of pleasure, or of love was recounted, the young man's eyes brightened into greater animation, his ears seemed standing out like those of the animal to which his attention has been likened; and when it drew near the closing scene, he crept nearer and nearer the sorcerer, whose voice grew fainter and fainter, until, at the pictured death of Konigsmark, he fell exhausted, and ceased to speak.

The dead silence which prevailed was broken by Konigsmark, who, leaping upon his feet, said, "Let me see her, let me behold her form but in a vision, and I will bless you, though your arts are those of the devil. I will not leave this ground until, by your magic power, you shew me her who is thus to rule my destiny."

The sweet voice was again heard, as it warbled the following words to a plaintive melody—

“ Hark ! he calls ; obey, obey ;
Sister spirits, come away,
Leave the dark pine’s gloomy shade,
Leave the groves in which you prayed,
Leave our master’s solemn rites,
Leave the council of the sprites,
Leave the toiling for our food,
Leave the victim in his blood,
Bring with you, to cheer his soul,
The Lapland witches’ magic bowl.
My call obey. Awake ! Arise !
And make her pass before his eyes.”

As the incantation ceased, Konigsmark heard a rustling noise behind him, and in a moment he found the place of the seven men occupied by seven women. One taller than the rest held in her hand a large rude carved bowl, which she placed on the altar. If anything could have frightened Konigsmark, it would have been the hideous appearance of the unearthly beings who sat in silence upon the seven seats around him, and who had obeyed the incantation of the silvery voice.

It was at that season of the year when the day scarce lives before the sun retires, and leaves the long twilight. The frozen alps

which compose the chain of mountains called Severnor were tinged with the last rays of that bright luminary, whilst the huge congeries of frightful rocks and stupendous mountains which crowd this miserable land assumed a dark and dreary appearance. It seemed to Konigsmark as if all the world were shut out from the circular lawn, the thick forest and apparently insurmountable precipices, enclosing the beings around him.

Not one of the hideous figures in his presence was of the height of five feet, and their withered and skeleton carcasses seemed struggling to escape from their flimsy envelopements of dress. No kind of drapery flowed around their shapes. They wore a species of pantaloons which reached to the shoes. Their doublets fitted to the figure. A leather girdle encircled the waist of each, to which was hung a mass of rings. Fantastic-looking handkerchiefs covered a part of the head, and great care was exhibited in the profusion of ornaments which hung round their scraggy necks, or dangled from their brown and leather-like ears. An inordinate desire for finery and dress, which,

according to the genius of Hindostan, is one of the six inherent failings of the sex, was evident even in the embroidery manufactured from brass wire, which was profusely lavished over every disposable part; and these attempts at ornament made the skeleton dwarfs look still more horrible.

A low mumbling incantation was kept up; the voice seemed to pass through throats dried by age, and hoarse from continued mutterings; the long skinny fingers, dabbling in the profusion of rings, contributed to render the sound more striking, whilst the continued bowing of the head and prostration of the body, gave a superstitious horror to the scene. This continued for some time, when one more hideous than the rest gave the Count a leathern pitcher filled with water. He was desired to walk round the bowl seven times, and at the last, to pour out the contents into the magical vessel. As he completed each round, the melody, or the mumbling, seemed to change; and when he had finished his gyrations, the voices by one accord ceased.

With a steady hand he poured the contents

of the leathern jug into the bowl, when each witch in her turn advanced; and after spreading her hands over the water, dropped into it ring, as she muttered something unintelligible to the Count, and nearly inaudible. When this part of the ceremony was completed, a sort of dance succeeded, in which they held each other's hands, and kept beating time to a quick measure with their feet. They made seven turns round the bowl; then releasing their hands, and shouting, as if afraid of the presence of some great power, they fell with their faces upon the ground, and endeavoured to hide every part of their features. Thus they remained in silence, and almost immoveable, whilst Konigsmark, left alone outside of the group which had encircled the magic bowl, anxiously awaited some communication.

Presently the same sweet voice, which now seemed to come from another direction, was heard again, repeating the following lines:—

“ By all the power of magic art,
Which lives and reigns in every heart—
By that above the world's control,
Which strikes with awe each mortal soul—

Swift as the wind which skims the seas,
Or bowls around our barrier trees,
Come to my call! Appear! appear!
He who invokes thy name is here.
Hark, the bubbling water moves,
And yet no air disturbs our groves,
Its surface now is clear and calm.
Arise! complete the magic charm!"

At this line the seven witches suddenly rose, and dropping each a bean into the bowl, retreated hastily into the woods. He then heard the words—

"Mortal, approach the bowl, and see
The maid who rules thy destiny."

Konigsmark instantly stepped forward, and looked into the magic vase: plainly, distinctly, and clearly he saw therein the figure of a child of about ten years of age. Scarcely had he turned to survey its features, which were not of a superior beauty, when the water became agitated; as his eager eyes were fixed upon the object, it seemed, as it were, to dissolve away; and when the same placid mirror appeared in the returning calm, nothing was visible, not even a ring, a bean, or the spirit he had invoked.

The hoarse breeze of the evening now murmured in the grove; the twilight seemed darker than usual; not a human being was nigh, and all assumed a solemn, awful appearance. With a heart not unmoved by what he had witnessed, and with a noiseless step, as if fearful of the very sound he might create, Konigsmark quickly left the place. The footmarks on the snow pointed out the road through the labyrinth of windings, and conducted him to the boat. He cast off from the shore, and with apparent facility reached the fir-tree; and having secured the boat as he found it, he gave a deep and heavy sigh, and hastening with his utmost speed, burst into the tent, where he had left his companion, and fell senseless on the fern.

CHAPTER IV.

"Now entertain conjecture for a Time."

HENRY V. Act iv.

CHARLES JOHN VON KONIGSMARK was born at Nyborg, in the Isle of Funen, in 1659. He was a Swede by birth, but sprung originally from a German family. Throughout the seventeenth century no name stands higher in the military annals of Sweden than that above-mentioned; and from before the end of the reign of Gustavus Adolphus down nearly to the commencement of that of Charles XII., the name of Konigsmark was a passport to every court in Europe. Charles John was the son of Conrad Christopher, Count

Konigsmark, the Minister-general of the Artillery of Sweden, and was nephew of Otho William, Count Konigsmark, who entered the French service, and was made a marshal by Louis XIV. On the breaking out of the general war in 1672, he was recalled by Charles XI. and was made governor of Swedish Pomerania; in 1688, he entered the service of Venice; fought against the Turks in the Morea, under Morosini; distinguished himself in every action, and was ultimately swept to his grave by a violent fever in the same year. He left behind him a great name as a soldier, and not an indifferent one as a poet; his last effort was in the publication of some German hymns, much celebrated for their piety and harmony, in Stockholm, in 1682.

The early days of our hero, Charles John, or as he was styled *The Konigsmark*, were devoted to the general education of the times, and he early manifested a love of the romantic: his mind became imbued with certain superstitious notions, and no one at his tender age was more instructed in sorcery and magic.

The scene which has just been described had

convinced Konigsmark that some credit was to be attached to the alleged power of these supernatural beings; for it must be remembered that at the time when he lived, the Laplanders were mostly pagans, and obtained great reputation as sorcerers, even up to the year 1743. Hogstrom* remarked, "that a great portion of the Laplanders in secret adored their idols."

The conviction in Konigsmark's mind that he had associated with those who were supported by the devil, arose from the presence of the women; for, in the orthodox idolatry of Lapland, no woman of the age of puberty was ever admitted within the sacred confines dedicated to their gods. It is expressly mentioned by Skjoldebrand that at all the sacrifices, which consisted chiefly in offerings of bones and the horns of the reindeer, no woman was ever admitted, lest inevitable and immense calamity should follow. Men alone approached the idols. They commenced their ceremony by uncovering their heads, and bowing many times towards the god. They then prostrated

* Hogstrom was a missionary and curate of Gillivare, in Lapland, in 1745.

themselves, and after walking on their hands and knees to the foot of the idol, they made their offerings. If a dog appeared, the god was wroth, and the prayers and the offerings were unheard and rejected. Thiermes, or Thor; was the greatest of all their gods, and was generally represented by a part of the trunk of the birch-tree; the root of which bore some resemblance to a human figure. The original Thor in Upsala is of this description, and is cocked up *à cheval* on a large nail. Horangalis is the Thor of the Swedes and the Jupiter of the Greeks; the god of thunder; the presiding deity over the health, life, and death of man: and before this statue, or within the sacred precincts, the witches had prepared the charm of the magic bowl, and had called to their presence, and at their command, the child who at that moment was in England, but had become visible to Konigsmark.

As Konigsmark advanced beyond the age of twelve, his time had been spent in reading of those who were supposed to rule the destiny of man. Often had he inwardly

vowed to visit them in their own abode ; and the general credence was, that these unhallowed beings skimmed through the air, moaned in the breeze, and embodied themselves in cats.

Those must be little versed in the history of Lapland who are ignorant of the fact, that each family maintained a black cat, to which they talked as to a rational being, and communicated their greatest secrets. They consulted it on all occasions, and it was their companion in all their hunting excursions.

Each night, Konigsmark would try to watch the wind, and see if some substance rode upon the blast. Each noise which to his tender mind was unaccountable, was imagined to be the deep sighing of some witch imprisoned in a leaf, or enclosed within a flower ; and to such a height had his young imagination carried him, that he had devised thousands of spells to raise the devil ; and had night after night tried every method recorded in books, by which man might be enabled to converse with the great enemy of the human race.

The daring spirit of Konigsmark had been

the theme of general admiration amongst his school-fellows, on whom he looked down as narrow-minded bigots, incapable of judging, directed by any master mind, subservient to every fear, and checked by every apprehension.

Konigsmark left his useless studies at the age of sixteen, and entered the army. At eighteen, he left that profession; and having some money at his command, he determined to travel north, accompanied by his retainer Vratz, and pay a visit to the island on which historians had fixed as the residence of those who held unhallowed meetings with the devil, and who, by blasphemous incantations, and mysterious ceremonies, could call the dead from the grave.

“Here’s a nice business,” said Vratz, as he started up on seeing his master fall; “there will not be a drop of that brandy left if I am to keep pouring it down his throat until he thinks fit to speak. This comes of going amongst devils, and seeking to find what we are sure to know quite soon enough. A pest upon all knowledge excepting that by which we learn to distil generous liquors, or to cook a reindeer in as many manners as the French are said to cook

eggs." Here Vratz poured some water on the forehead of his master, and stretching him out flat on his back, began to rub his breast, as he said—"I'll try this first; the witches never sell spirits, and brandy is scarce."

As Konigsmark recovered, he began to mutter something about the girl; and when he said—"She cannot be more than ten years of age," Vratz lost his little patience, and said—"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself to think of any child of that age."

By degrees, Konigsmark recovered, and Vratz proceeded, at his desire, to prepare some dinner; for no one could consult these powers if they had eaten since the preceding midnight, and although curiosity had been satisfied, hunger had not been appeased.

"Did you find out, Count, if I was to be hung, or yourself beheaded?" said Vratz, with a sneer—"and how many marks does it require to have a conversation with the devil?"

"Give me some brandy, sirrah," said Konigsmark, sharply. "Pack up the knapsack, and when I have dined, we'll depart. Never

ask me a question about what I have heard, or what I have seen, or you'll repent of it."

Vratz could not help remarking the excited manner of his master, and he very prudently assisted the Count in lightening the bottle. "Now, Vratz, be quick; we cannot stay under this tent after seven o'clock."

"Then I apprehend the black gentleman will be here to dinner before we can make room for his majesty, for it wants but a minute of that now. This is hospitality with a vengeance. There's the wind roaring like an enraged lion. The snow, I dare say, will soon begin again to fall; there is no track to direct us, and we are at least two honest Swedish miles from the nearest hut; there, of course, we shall find that ugly ape, Borosky, who, if he has money enough, will have taken possession, and we shall have to turn out again."

"Quick, quick, Vratz; the tent begins to feel the wind; it is on the strike of the hour; we have not a moment." And scarcely had they cleared the entrance when a sudden gust, in which Konigsmark thought he recognised the silver-toned voice, even in the hoarse blus-

tering of the storm, swept past the travellers, and the tent was blown away.

"I have heard of *that* before," said Vratz, with unconcerned coolness. "Witches always take their houses with them for a land voyage, and they ride in sieves when they go to sea."

"And after this, you pretend to say you have no faith in these beings?"

"Not I, Count; all you can say is, 'it is a strange coincidence of circumstances.' You gave a hint that the tent would be blown away at seven, and so it was; well, you have guessed rightly; but I see no reason why this should not have happened, more especially as the wind was high."

"And having accomplished that one purpose," said the Count, "see how calm it is."

"That often happens in squalls of wind," retorted the retainer; "before a hurricane, it is always calm, and the gale frequently ceases as suddenly as it began. I never will believe in witchcraft until they can distil brandy from salt water; and I'll never put my faith in them until they give me a ride on a broomstick, or save me some work by carrying my burthen;

and they are not fond of hiring themselves out as porters to a young man with a full purse, in search of adventures."

"Talk on, but walk quickly, Vratz; yonder is the hut."

CHAPTER V.

"What is your sex's earliest, latest care,
Your soul's supreme ambition?—to be fair.
For this, eyes, feet, and hands are put to school,
And each instructed feature has its rule."

LYTTLETON.

IN the month of October, 1677, the infant daughter and heiress of the house of Percy, the Lady Elizabeth Percy, then at the tender age of eleven, was seated by the side of her grandmother, the widow of Earl Algernon, in a large and magnificently furnished room at Petworth.

When the Countess of Northumberland contracted a second marriage with Mr. Ralfe Montagu, the English ambassador at Paris,

her only child (the Lady Elizabeth Percy) was given over to the charge of Lady Algernon, who resided principally at the ancient mansion of the Percies, Petworth; and under her care the education of this extraordinary girl was conducted. The child had not been relinquished by its mother without deep regret; but Montagu, who hated the idea of watching over the cares of another man's child, and who wished his beautiful wife to live for him alone, persuaded the Countess, that although the child was the richest heiress in England, she would still increase her fortune by the arrangement, as the old Dowager Countess of Algernon had offered, if the child were given up to her, to settle upon her the large estates she possessed as one of the two co-heiresses of her father, the late Earl of Suffolk.

No woman resisted the arguments of Ralfe Montagu, and the young and beautiful Countess—for she was only twenty-four when she married the ambassador—yielded with blind subserviency to his wishes, and the Lady Elizabeth Percy was made over to the care and

guardianship of the Dowager Countess of Algernon, in 1673, she being at that time eight years of age.

"Above all things, my child, remember," said the Countess of Algernon, "to maintain a proper pride; never seek for the society of those below you; they will court yours; but remember, with the exception of your sovereign, no one is higher by birth, or more noble by descent, than yourself. I have told you of this for four years."

"Is it for this, grandmamma, that you never will allow me to play with other girls of my own age. I should be so happy if I was only the daughter of a common gentleman, for then I might be with other children, and laugh and play as they do."

"Foolish child!" said the Countess. "Can I never make you understand your position? When your father, the eleventh earl of Northumberland, died, the male line of the Percies, which for nearly three hundred years preceding had been Earls of Northumberland and Barons Percy, became extinct. Yes, the

earldom and all the other titular honours of the family are extinct; but the extensive domains over which your ancestors ruled two hundred years before the Norman conquest have descended to you. You are the richest heiress in Europe, and you must strive not to disgrace the name by forming alliances, acquaintances, friendships, and companionships with those beneath you. Now, let me see you hold your cards as I taught you, and we will practise a game of ombre. Tradrille, you understand. Remember that every action of your life should be a studied elegance, and that people of noble birth and aristocratic manners may always be recognised even by their mode of entering their carriage, or in the easy management of a fan. My husband, during the Civil War and Commonwealth, was called the 'wary and reserved piece of *nobility*;'* and even in those times, when the lowest dregs rose to the highest situations, he maintained to the last his perpendicular on the slippery stage, and died, God rest his soul! a *nobleman* and a gentleman, they say. Pride made the angels

* Clarendon.

fall, but a woman who has no pride falls to a certainty. Let the cards slip elegantly off as you deal them, and do not make a noise. 'Slow and low, slow and low,' should be your motto as to conversation, and as to dealing at cards."

"Oh, grandmamma!" said the child, "how I do hate cards! And then that horrible *minuet de-la cour*—to call that dancing! why, it is a slow march with everlasting curtseys. How I envy you, grandmamma, for now you are not obliged to move about to music."

"I avoid, child, as much as possible to interfere with those who are younger than myself, but I am unfortunately obliged to accept a partner now and then." Here the venerable lady drew herself up, as she remarked, "It is a tax beauty is compelled to pay, for no lady of birth should be guilty of an incivility. Let me see you walk through the minuet. No, no, child, like this—now, move gracefully, as I do—now an inclination—now slide. Look at me—hold your head more uprightly—now the curtsey. Ah, that is well and elegantly done. Now, my dear, amuse yourself

as a lady of rank should do; walk in the garden, and take care your two attendants are at a respectful distance from you; let them pluck the flowers you select; and do not risk the pain a thorn might create. Holy Virgin! where are you? Why, as I live, I could have sworn you disappeared for a second. Pray God, it be no bad omen, no devilish witchcraft. There, go, child, whilst I repose for an hour. Perhaps when I keep awake, I may think of a husband for you; you are eleven, and in a year or two we shall see who is looking for the rich heiress of all the wealth of the Percies." *

Trained to subserviency, and instructed to pay the blindest obedience to the wealthy heiress, her attendants waited on her during her walk, and obeyed her childish wishes; and the familiarity of long servitude in the family was denied even to her grey-headed nurse.

* Mrs. Jameson has sketched the character of the Dowager Countess of Algernon as a "meddling and jealous old woman, who, having got her long-descended and amply-dowered grand-daughter completely in her hands, made her the subject of constant intrigues with men of power who wished for wealth, and rich men who wished for rank and power."

Thus was pride engendered, all the delights of youth crushed, and the mind formed to regard nobility more than affection, and to estimate wealth before friendship. All the little endearments of childhood were repulsed, the playful carelessness of the infant was checked, and a studied elegance was practised. The dowager received her when she entered the apartment with all the studied form and etiquette of a duchess of sixty; the attendants never ventured near her person; and when she rode in her carriage, the number of running footmen were increased, it being intimated to her that a lady of her wealth should always go properly protected and attended.

In the evening, when the dowager indulged in her favourite ombre, only those of the first families were admitted, and the Lady Elizabeth, dressed in all the absurdity of the day, converting, as far as dress could work the miracle, the child into the woman, was always present; she sat by the side of her grandmother, and received instruction as the game progressed. But at Petworth the company was carefully culled from the London society; few of the

county ever intruded beyond a morning's visit.

Amongst all the dowager's friends, only one who had not nobility of descent, but who had the much higher qualification of the highest aristocracy of talent, was admitted to an intimacy, and that one was John Locke; and even he, although the wonder of his age, would not have forced through the barrier of pride, had he not travelled with the parents of Lady Elizabeth Percy; for in 1679, the Earl and Countess of Northumberland, after the loss of a daughter, went to Paris, to wean themselves a little from the grief of so heavy a bereavement, and took John Locke with them, as their attendant physician. After a very short residence in Paris, the Earl, leaving his Countess and physician in Paris, proceeded alone to Italy; where, after imprudently travelling in very hot weather, at that period of the day when he should have reposed in quiet, he was seized with a fever, and before intimation of his indisposition could reach his Countess, he died, almost unattended and alone.

Locke had watched the growth of Lady Elizabeth with a parent's eye; he was much devoted to her, for often, before the Countess of Algernon instilled her foolish pride into the child's mind, the great philosopher relieved the intense labour of his brain by some juvenile pastime, making her his companion, and entering with spirit into all her amusements; the giant unbended his strength and reposed in all the listlessness of childhood. Such repose was requisite, and the great master of the human mind felt that he did not disgrace his talent when he laid down on the grass for the child to cover him with hay, or when he gave his instructions by implanting in his pupil's memory the never-forgotten melody of Jack and Gill. Henry the Fourth of France was not discomposed when the Spanish ambassador found him romping with his children; nor was that great minister above joining in the frolic.

"I have," said Locke, as he bowed to the Countess of Algernon, "received a letter to-day from the Countess of Northumberland, making particular inquiries concerning her daughter, and from an enclosure of Mr. Ralfe

Montagu, it seems that already some proposition of marriage for the Lady Elizabeth has been made."

"Who," said the Countess, as the natural colour of her cheeks put to shame the artificial flush, "dare negotiate for her hand without my being first consulted? Neither do I consider it complimentary that I should receive the intelligence from a third person, and one, although attached to, by no means related to the family."

"For that," said Locke, with much modesty, and with a low inclination of his head, "I am indebted to the friendship of the Countess of Northumberland, and to the insignificance of my own birth."

It was evident to the dowager that she had hurt the feelings of the physician, for in that light, and as a paid menial she regarded him; and caring little for the pang she inflicted, she continued—"As all the family arrangements seem destined to pass through strange hands, may I ask who is the adventurer who seeks to enrich himself by a marriage with the Lady Elizabeth Percy?"

"Excuse me, madam," said Locke, "if I object to become a meddler. I could not refuse to read Mr. Montagu's letter, nor to deliver his message; but since I find my motive may be misunderstood, I shall beg his excellency to convey his own wishes to your ladyship."

"His wishes, Mr. Locke, at any rate with me, shall be of no avail. I marvel not that the man who could be bold enough to squeeze the queen's hand, should have wit enough to have persuaded the Countess of Northumberland to marry him; but I am too old to be won by words, and my granddaughter has sense enough to be directed by one who has made her a rich heiress."

At this moment, the young Lady Elizabeth entered the room; the door had been opened by two servants, who bowed as she passed. Lady Algernon made a low curtsy, and the girl, tutored to her part, returned with laughable gravity the stately salute. Nature then overcame all restraint, she ran to Locke; and to the indescribable horror of her grandmother, sat upon his knee, and kissed his cheek,

looking at him with all the fondness and affection of a daughter.

“Lady Elizabeth Percy! Lady Elizabeth Percy!” ejaculated Lady Algernon, “has all my care been bestowed upon you in vain—the acts and elegancies of society at once overthrown? The heiress of the house of Northumberland should have too much pride to sit upon a physician’s knee!”

“Never,” said Locke, as he seemed not to heed the insult, “never attempt by education, or by the cold restraint of art, to stifle the affections of nature. You may make the Lady Elizabeth a popinjay, but, God be praised, you cannot alter the warmth of her heart, or eradicate the memory of past fondness. What did you mention, Lady Algernon, concerning the queen and Montagu? Your ladyship repeats anecdotes with so much humour, that the most laborious mind would cease from its studies to be refreshed by your conversation.”

Lady Algernon was won over in a moment. It was her weakness to believe she was unrivalled in anecdote, and she immediately replied—“It was not Ralfe Montagu, but his

elder brother, Edward, who was dismissed as chamberlain to Queen Catherine. She, poor silly woman, had never had an admirer before, and knew very little of love, and Edward wishing to establish himself permanently in her favour, and being an adept, after having conveyed his intention by his eyes, used to squeeze the queen's hand. Not understanding the hint—for she was a cold woman—she asked the king one day, 'What people meant by squeezing one by the hand?' The king answered, 'Love.' 'Oh, then,' replied the queen, 'Mr. Montagu loves *me* mightily!'

Locke smiled as he played with the small hand of the heiress. "Your health," he said, "is improved by this Sussex air, and your eyes seem animated with intelligence. Pray God, that all the fantastic arts of fashion may not warp and distort the most innocent mind in Christendom. Why, child, they have made a woman of you in dress before you have laid aside your doll! And the idea of marriage! I shall beg his excellency to write to your ladyship."

"I pray you, stay a moment. Lady Eliza-

beth, I recommend you to your garden." Here the old lady curtseyed, and the child making a low inclination to her grandmother, and smiling at Locke as if she were aware of the folly, walked slowly and gracefully from the room. "Excuse any former impetuosity and rudeness. I am willing to listen to your intelligence; it is a duty you owe to society to forgive the irritability of age."

Locke penetrated her intention at a glance; but as it suited his purpose, he replied, "It is a match not unworthy the house of Northumberland." Here he produced the letter, and read—"It will yield us much gratification, if our much respected Lady Algernon would give her consent to this union."

"You should have mentioned before, Mr. Locke, that my consent *was asked*; it changes the affair much, for I see I am considered with all respect, and am consulted. Pray proceed."

"She is a lady of acknowledged quickness, shrewdness, and kindness, having the interest of my wife's daughter much at heart, and I would not for a diadem form any matrimonial

connexion for the Lady Elizabeth without having the benefit of her experience, and her most unqualified consent." (Here followed what was not read.) "Read this to the old patch-worm; *read* it. Women are easily deceived when their talents and their *power* are complimented and courted."

During the time Locke read the letter, Lady Algernon fanned herself gently and gracefully, and her hand was moved as if to stop the overwhelming tide of flattery. She gave a deep sigh as the physician concluded; adding, "Pray God my poor weak judgment may be directed aright. It is a great charge which has devolved on me, but I will give my opinion to the best of my poor ability. Proceed, good Mr. Locke. Ralfe Montagu writes well; he is a shrewd observer."

"You will mention to her with all respect, that Henry Cavendish, Earl of Ogle, the only son of Henry, Duke of Newcastle, has spoken of an union with the house of Northumberland. In our humble opinion, the alliance would not disgrace the family; and if Lady Algernon, who is better informed than any lady alive of

the exact merits of the case, and who traces each family with all the accuracy of the biographer and the truth of the historian, seems disposed to forward this alliance, we should be gratified, and her charge not improperly wedded." Here the letter was carefully placed in the huge pocket worn in those days; and Locke, giving a profound bow, asked if he was to have the honour of communicating her ladyship's answer, or if Ralfe Montagu should have the greater pleasure of receiving it from the hand-writing of her ladyship.

"I will write it myself, good Mr. Locke; and now I would fain ask your opinion of my granddaughter—I mean as to her education. I have carefully instructed her in the proper bearing and manner of a lady. She plays ombre well, is quick in tradrille, and graceful in the minuet de la cour; but I have rather dulled her wish to exhibit in the sprightly rigadon, for anything approaching to fatigue is improper."

"She is, of course, well read in history," said Locke, "and has the female accomplishments of music and of drawing? She has a

sweet voice, and would sing marvellously, for her ear is quick."

"If her memory is retentive, she should be well informed. I have a poor gentleman, who reads to her every day the descent of each family, which is true history; and I avow it on the honour of a Christian lady, that she has menials who play to her whenever she is drowsy, and would be lulled to sleep; and one of gentle blood, cunning in the pencil, often presents her with drawings. She has thus the best instruction, and is very conversant with these arts and sciences."

"Does she not prove her excellence, in these agreeable accomplishments of playing and singing?"

"I cry you mercy, good doctor," replied the Lady Algernon; "would you so far disgrace the blood of the Percies as to see the heiress of that family scratching a mandoline, thumping a spinet, or using her delicate voice to amuse strangers. Those of high blood should liberally reward others who gain a livelihood by such arts; but no lady should degrade herself by any exhibition in public. In

her own room I hear her singing to her doll ; and now, as you mention it, I have remarked that her voice is rather sweet ; but her stately bearing, the gravity of her step, the elegance of every motion, and careless arrangement of her fan, are evident."

"If, madam," said Locke, with much earnestness, "you expect that child to fathom the intentions of men, or to guard against the wiles and wickednesses of this world, without acquiring knowledge, or without a proper regard to religion, you will be mistaken, and she will be miserable. Nothing which is instructive degrades the mind, and no one is despicable who is not ignorant."

"Blessed saints!" said the old lady, "has she not a splendidly illuminated Prayer Book ! I should think as you do, if she were as ignorant as our king, who trusts in astrology, and employs Montagu to consult the magician. The Lady Elizabeth has all the education a lady of rank should have ; she is pretty also, Mr. Locke. What say you, is she not very pretty?"

"The tastes of men fortunately vary, or we

should all love one object. She is endearing, affectionate, of a comely person; but the pencil of Lely will never make her resemble her beautiful mother, who attracted the king's notice, and wisely retired to France, retaining her virtue unsullied, and resisting even the addresses of her monarch."

"Yes, yes," said Lady Algernon, smiling; "she would not have asked the king what squeezing a hand meant. I see you have lived long enough with her and Ralfe Montagu to disguise your thoughts. But Lely shall make her as beautiful on canvas as he has made her mother; or by my faith I see no use in riches, if they cannot make all the world, and above all a painter, flatter a woman. I crave your pardon, good doctor, I must prepare for dinner."

Here a very stately curtsey was executed, and Lady Algernon, rustling her silks, and shewing the high red heels of her shoes, pattered out of the apartment.

CHAPTER VI.

“ ——— Things done well
And with a care, exempt themselves from fear ;
Things done without example, in their issue
Are to be feared. ——— ”

HENRY VIII.

“ I USE the freedom,” said Montagu, as he read aloud from a letter, “ which my situation may warrant, as governor of Pomerania, to present to your notice and kind protection my nephew, the Count Charles John Von Konigsmark, who is pursuing his travels in various parts of Europe, and intends visiting Paris. I pray you to direct him well ; those acts of hospitality and kindness which your excellency may extend to him, shall be remembered as offered to myself, and gratefully retained in my heart. He is young, enthusiastic, noble ; his

high birth and lineal descent rank him foremost in Sweden, where he has been much noticed by his sovereign. If your excellency should be consulted by any of your friends as to the safest route through the country I govern, I pray you direct him to me, and he shall not fail in finding the wherewithal to make his travels agreeable."

"Bid the messenger take this note," said Montagu to the page in attendance, as he wrote requesting Konigsmark to honour him with his company at dinner that day. "Who is with the Countess?"

"The Earl of Ogle and the Colonel Brett."

"Tell the Colonel I would speak to him alone; and mention to the Countess, that she will receive at dinner to-day the Count Von Konigsmark. I have named three o'clock." The page bowed and retired, and in a few minutes the Colonel entered. "You may convey yourself," said Montagu to the page, "without our hearing; close that door, and retire to the corridor. Be seated, Colonel. Now, how stands it with Cavendish? Is the affair so far arranged that we can rely upon him, or does he hold his

purse-strings with a niggard hand? By my faith, unless he comes up to our demand, he shall not marry the Lady Elizabeth."

"We can mould him to our wish," replied Brett. "He is as keen upon the marriage as any dog upon the scent of a fox; he says he will speedily raise ten thousand pounds, and give the money on the day of the signature. He is a gentleman of his word."

"You shall have a portion, Brett, which shall re-establish your finance. Now mark me: to-day a Swede of high birth dines here; it has struck me that we might speak greatly of the Lady Elizabeth, so as to excite his cupidity, and by establishing a rival, make Cavendish more eager to secure our best exertions; as he becomes clamorous, we may become exorbitant, or raise our demand a little higher."

"It is a thought worthy of the king's ambassador at Paris."

"Again, Brett, I have another prospect. You know the king has quarrelled with his old mistress, the Duchess of Cleveland; she has arrived in Paris, and dines here also to-day. I would win this woman, for she will continue

to correspond with the king, and by her speaking much of the magnificence of my style, of living, may procure me further salary; the king changes so often, that he may retain her as a friend, although at present his love, if Charles can love, is made over to the Frenchwoman."

"Never was there a shrewder man for his own interest than his excellency the British ambassador," said Brett. "How can I serve you?"

"By drawing my wife, Cavendish, and the Swede into a conversation concerning the Lady Elizabeth, while I devote a quarter of an hour to the Duchess; I shall not need a longer time; women are easily won by those who know the sex."

"That is true, as regards yourself; you seem to have a charm as irresistible as the fascination of the snake; the women, like the birds, are captivated by the sparkling of your eyes, and fall as powerless, and as surely, into the jaws of the destroyer. Witness your present wife—she who mourned for her first husband with such sincerity."

"She is of provokingly good health. Some people die young, and it often death to take a beauty; my wife, too, gious; it is said, 'those whom the go die early;' how strange it is, the sayin realized in her."

"She is young, beautiful, rich, temper, and of exquisite manners; s ever man could be happy in marriage, i be with one of her accomplishments a position."

"I tell you, Brett, ever since Pop cent III. invented the shackle which man and woman together by a religio mony, marriages have become much matters of convenience than the result or of friendship. I would marry the daughter if she only had a great dow wife's beauty soon fades in the eyes of band. Go and get ready for dinner."

If history is to be trusted, never was a more profligate man than Ralfe Mo and never was there a more successful o

"I am delighted, Count," said Mo
"to have this opportunity of presentin

to my wife, and of acknowledging my gratitude to your uncle for this introduction to yourself." Konigsmark bowed, and Montagu's quick eye surveyed him in a moment—he was seldom deceived in either sex.

Konigsmark appeared dressed in the very height and extravagance of the prevailing fashion; he wore his long light hair flowing over his shoulders; his sword hilt was of great value, and every part of his attire bespoke a man of rank; whilst his manner was graceful and elegant, and his words were well selected and fluent. On the entrance of the Countess of Northumberland, a slight flush suffused his face, and he so far forgot his usual guarded manner as to scrutinize her features, as if he had seen them previously; he recovered himself in time to witness the entrance of the Duchess of Cleveland, and remarked the elegant approach of Ralfe Montagu; he was presented to each, and the Countess engaged him in conversation concerning his future travels.

"I am uncertain of my destination," said Konigsmark, as he harmonized his voice into a musical key. "Count Otho William

my uncle, has been very liberal of his inductions, and I am fearful that the gauds of Paris might tempt a stronger than mine to loiter in its enchantments confess, although I had intended going to Spain, I feel an irresistible desire to visit the land."

"You shall not want for good inductions," replied the Countess; "it is very well worth the scrutiny of the senses, and we boast a rivalry with the world in the beauty of our women."

Konigsmark conveyed more by his answer to this remark, than the most studious language could have spoken; a slight and transient blush covered the cheek of the Countess, the traveller felt his own glow with a warmth which would fain have concealed. This little had not been unnoticed by Colonel Bruce, who seized the first opportunity of mentioning the existence of Lady Elizabeth Percy, although at the age of eleven only, and as handsome as her mother, and reckoned like her. Lord Ogle joined in the plan proposed by Montagu and

well; he was in close conversation with the Duchess, and was unobserved even by his wife, who was very jealous of him, and who had been won, with all her large fortune, by the irresistible manner—the easy, affable, lively, clever conversation of this money-hunting minister.

During the dinner and afterwards, the conversation most coveted by Lord Ogle and Konigsmark was of the heiress, the likeness of the child to its mother, and the idea of which Konigsmark could not divest himself, that the features of the Countess resembled those he had seen in the magic bowl; then large fortune and high birth, besides the assurance that a person of the exact age of the child was to be the star of his destiny, prompted him to the resolve of leaving Paris without delay. Brett carefully let drop some of the venom of jealousy. He told the Swede that already propositions of marriage had been made by Lord Ogle, but that the Lady Elizabeth was self-willed in many respects, although under some restraint of the Lady Algernon; he vividly sketched the character of the latter, insinuated that

even at her age the tender speeches of a handsome man might be well received, and that a formal manner, great observance of etiquette, with a certain pride of oneself and reverence for her, would insure a good reception. With the tact of an able general he then turned to the magnificence of Pevensey and recommended Konigsmark to see to the imposing edifice; he promised to procure letters to Lady Algernon; and by a return, apparently unpremeditated, on the heiress, he so far excited the curiosity of the Swede, that Konigsmark's mind was made up to leave Paris almost immediately.

Whilst Brett and Konigsmark were employed, Lord Ogle was urging his suit on the Countess.

"To what, then, can you object?" said he earnestly.

"Not to your birth, my good lord, or your family, or yourself—but I cannot, as a mother, consent to the marriage of my daughter until she is yet eleven years of age."

"Kings," replied Lord Ogle, "are sons of kings."

betrothed in their cradles; and although Lady Elizabeth is young, others as young as herself have been married. In Persia it is common."

"The manners of other nations of warmer climates, and where children are *forced* into women, can be no guide for me. I confess my willingness to receive you as a son-in-law. I know that I am unable, from Montagu's dislike to children, to bestow upon my child a mother's care, and I am certain that in a year or two, the strict manner of Lady Algeron—her pomp—her worldly grandeur—will render Lady Elizabeth but ill at ease at Petworth. I therefore could wish to see her settled; but at her age the very act would engender ridicule, and might mar the child's prospects in regard to her grandmother's intentions. Leave it, Lord Ogle, for the present. I pledge myself that no other shall be entertained before you; and I have no hesitation in saying, that no family could be more acceptable to me than that of the Duke of Newcastle."

"I must abide by your ladyship's desire

under the conviction that I am at liberty, when your daughter is older, to resume my proposition?"

"Certainly, my lord. And in this desire I feel I do not deprive you of any affection, or render you miserable by my prohibition, as I believe you have never seen my daughter."

Brett, who was on the watch to keep all parties engaged, seeing Lord Ogle likely to terminate the conversation and leave the Countess more at liberty to watch her husband, now brought up Konigsmark, and mentioned his desire to see Petworth.

"Kings," said Montagu, to the Duchess, in a low, tremulous whisper, (his eyes sparkling with vivacity, and his lips quivering with passion,) "are more inconstant than other men; few women can ever retain their affections. The easy access of a monarch to any beauty, and that beauty believing herself honoured by his approach, renders a permanency of favour to any one precarious; in fact, monarchs bestow their favours with as boundless a liberality as they sprinkle silver coin (provided by their subjects) on Maunday. You must not, fair and

beautiful Duchess, take to heart the temporary displeasure of your sovereign, and as I am his representative here, I trust you will prove your constancy to royalty, even to the imitation of it."

"For shame—for shame, Mr. Montagu," the Duchess replied. "Is it so very common, this inconstancy, that even you—not six months married to that beautiful woman—would whisper love in my ears?"

"Think how surely I can restore you to the favour of the inconstant monarch—if to return to him be your object. I hold a charm which is infallible, and when I find the Duchess of Cleveland inclined to repose on my honour and my affection, it will not be withheld from her."

"I do not blush to avow, although the wife of another, that my monarch's love is my greatest wish. It is true he is estranged from me, and I believe in the difficulty of retaining his affection; but with his love is gone also the power I held—all the liberality with which I dispensed places and pensions. In speaking to you, Mr. Montagu, I speak to one long used

to the court, its scandals, and its pleasures. Again to regain my position and my power, I would venture far."

"It is as much as prudence would permit. I beg you to be very wary before the Countess. Her jealous eyes are quick as the eagle's, and her revenge would follow a discovery. I will visit you to-morrow at your hotel, and take care that you are a constant visitor. It is strange that such supreme beauty and unrivalled excellence of God's fairest work could not retain King Charles's love. She appears marvellous in my sight, for I am dazzled nearly to blindness in beholding her. What sparkling eyes are those—what a variety of form is there—and how transparent whiteness is this ungloved hand which glows to my touch."

"Mr. Montagu," said the Countess, and leaving Lord Ogle, "it is time for me to attend the court;" then bowing from the Duchess of Cleveland, whose indiscretion she had witnessed, she said, "If Mr. Montagu kisses your grace's hand, it will be only to one who lived so near his sovereign."

CHAPTER VII.

“—— That you may, fair lady,
Perceive I speak sincerely, and high notes
Ta'en of your many virtues, the king's majesty
Commends his good opinion to you.”

HENRY VIII.

STUNG by the sarcastic remark of the Countess of Northumberland, the Duchess of Cleveland determined to be revenged upon her, and casting aside all modesty of thought, even in the solitude of her chamber, she prepared to hurt her where she was most vulnerable—in her husband's love. Montagu cared for nothing but gold and power, yet was he jealous of his honour as a husband; for when his sovereign deigned to visit his bride in England, quick of apprehension, he instantly returned to his embassy, before even the tar-

nish of a court whisper assailed the of his wife. It was pride—not love—dictated this; he would have sold money; but he would have considered overreached if she fell and he were not fitted. But he was fondly, truly beloved. Countess of Northumberland had been by his talents, and charmed by his dis she saw in him only his excellence, and bandaged her eyes to his faults; she knew general admiration of the sex, and that the civility or attention shewn by the Duchess arose more from a wish that which he believed would be grateful to the king, than from any inconstancy.

“She is a woman who may serve me,” said Montagu to his wife. “True, after my father’s death, I shall become Lord Montagu, but I would ascend a higher round of the ladder of life. She corresponds with me, and by a well-timed civility on our part may bend her to our purpose. Fear not; in this slight task my heart can waive inconstancy — your love is the only

cherish—your affection the blessing of my existence.”

“I fear you not, dear Montagu,” she replied; “whatever you do, I am sure will be right and honourable.”

“I have received,” said the ambassador, “a letter from the king, which betrays the feeling of his heart; now she has left him, he regrets her; and from the whole bearing of the letter it is evident he wishes us to uphold her here, so as to give the lie to the base tongues which would ruin her in public estimation. Our countenance will support her bravely, and we must see her often. I leave this generous act to your discretion. She has very wisely also brought over her daughter, the Countess of Sussex, the poor child who was married at twelve years of age, and is now but fourteen. You know this lady is *supposed* by the king to be his own daughter, and he made Dacre Earl of Sussex, in consideration of the marriage. We shall do wisely if we act generously. There is an old saw—‘Who gives to worth receives a benefit;’ we are not pan-

dering to powerless ones, but to those noured and protected by our sovereign."

"Your wishes, Montagu, are more those of my sovereign. Were it not for situation you hold, and the power this w yet commands, I would not receive her v my doors, for we should uphold the vir and the good, and not support the bas the profligate. I see, however, only with eyes in this affair; it is a tax upon our ness, to serve and follow the wishe desires of our sovereign."

"I own it most repugnant to my fee this patronage of the king's mistress; b world has learned to look with a lenier on his majesty's foible, and although we s stand higher in our own estimation by s refusing her acquaintance, yet we migh our situation, and become the laughter of who, with less pure motive, would mak political death the stepping-stone to greatness. I feel the immorality, w acknowledge the necessity of the act; purity cannot be assailed, and I am s your love."

Montagu said this with so plausible an air, and with so much apparent sincerity of manner, that a wiser woman than his wife might have been deceived. He rose, and kissing the Countess, begged her "not to consider the duty imposed by the king as any degradation to their own purity; it was their business to obey; and even," he continued, "if jealousy should assail your heart, you would banish the monster by one moment's reflection of your looking-glass. I forget in this business a civility I owe to another; Konigsmark is going to England—will you present him handsomely to Lady Algernon? Brett talked of Petworth in so high a strain, that the Swede is anxious to see it. Do me this favour, my love, for I am overwhelmed in business."

"Now, Brett," said Montagu, as he entered his chancellerie, "give me the letter. All goes on well, I find; my wife, acting by my advice, has checked a little the aspiring scheme of Ogle, who will but gallop the faster for this sudden bridling. Konigsmark's visit will gall him, and he will come to us as his only friends. We have time enough now before us. What said the Duchess to my letter?"

"She read it and smiled; and, Lady Sussex she had important business with your excellency at one, ordered the little before that hour, and bade he drive towards Versailles, to inhale more than that of the capital."

"Good; tell me, Brett, have you any train in the Swede's heart which Lady may light? have you prepared him the person he will meet? Faith, man, not have fallen on a better person; much formality as the king's guard on each motion seems ordered. Go to it, then, get the letter I desired her to write to me, and give it to Konigsmark, and with your mouth art inflame both his heart and his ears. Page, bid the state carriage to the door, let there be some additional footmen. I am in a hurry, but a quarter of one o'clock; be expedient. I am hurried."

The Duchess of Cleveland was an apt mistress for the ambassador, and her great art was to draw out of him what he was capable of. She was aware it could scarcely be done by her personal charms, if such were put in

tion with those of his wife ; but, still clinging to vanity, she satisfied herself with the reflection that she was more conversable, and had acquired a great reputation as a beauty, which even time had spared, and which divers cosmetics, if they could not restore entirely, might somewhat maintain.

“ I wonder much, Mr. Montagu, how a wife, so jealous of her husband, could trust him abroad in this immoral world without a guardian.”

“ She knew well, fair lady, the power of your charms, but consoled herself with the assurance that the Countess of Sussex would be present. I was careful not to inform her that so well did we understand each other, that the guardian of morality was changing the air towards Versailles, the plan having been arranged by the Duchess of Cleveland. I will avail myself of our position to implant a kiss of respect upon that hand, which I hail as a relic of my sovereign.”

“ You spoke to me, yesterday, of a power you possessed which would restore me to my king.”

"It is no magical fluid distilled
sence of a black cat, nor is it an i
draught to lull him to sleep, and
to enter his apartment unseen; I
grave secret, such as must be won
art of woman from my lips, which
never has passed. I almost doub
power of the Duchess of Cleveland
it."

"Am I a woman of such green a
deceived by such folly, which, may
gull a girl of sixteen? It is the
curiosity of our sex which is our ru
is the belief we have in the grave a
manner of yours which inspires our
which, being won, we are led by ea
to our fall. I believe in no secrets.
kind is it—political? That woul
interest me. Of court intrigue? I
I for that now. Is it of a new rival
the court of France? Alas! that woul
interest me. Or is it the avowal o
proper passion in Ralfe Montagu?"

"Oh, I hope your grace was awar
last night; one, such an adept, coul

misunderstand the tender pressure of the hand, which even my wife detected."

The very allusion to this inflamed the venomous hatred of the Duchess. She felt the keenness of the sting, and revenge was the only antidote. She but piqued Montagu to make him more pressing in his suit, and the interview was managed with so much tact by the Duchess, that the ambassador remained somewhat puzzled to comprehend his exact position. He had kept the secret of such value to the Duchess, and had not mentioned that the king's letter contained a particular injunction that the Duchess should be kept abroad, and assured of his majesty's displeasure. Montagu knew exactly when to mention such unwelcome communication.

"I could not well misconstrue your meaning, Mr. Montagu, neither could I well withstand the attacks of one so noted in the pages of gallantry, but for the love I still bear the king. For his love I sacrificed the dearest treasure of a woman's heart—my virtue: and be it called now, shame, despair, regret, remorse, ambition, or power, I love him still. I

will be more frank with you than I v
with another, for somehow I feel em
to speak without reserve to you, kno
passion of the king for your wife. I
both you and her the best persons to
me to him, lest, in pursuing his pu
the Countess, you both might suffer
caprice."

"I thank you much, fair lady, for y
consideration; but I knew of this a y
and withdrew my wife from England
the honour of a king's family. Y
already suffered by his caprice—re
France, and relinquish his love."

"Never! I know he loves me, or
does he command my correspondence
gain that love I care not what I do, s
am not betrayed."

"It appears that we are animated in
mon cause—you to secure the ki
keep him constant to you, and I to
this desirable end, in order to pres
wife's honour. It shall be agreed bet
to use our utmost endeavours to effi

The greatest confidence must be established, and love—love is the greatest cementer of confidence.”

“Alas, Montagu! that you, the favourite of our sex, should be so blind to your own happiness. You have a wife who tenderly, sincerely loves you; her jealousy is the best proof, for jealousy is the offspring of love. Why risk your domestic felicity for the gratification of a transient passion? Think of the bitter misery you entail upon her by a discovery; think of the certainty of the discovery, for there is a secret parlance in the eyes, which lovers use, believing it only understood by themselves, but which a woman reads distinctly, and which none but an unfledged boy misunderstands; and that I—I, who adore the Countess, should be the unhappy object of your attention—the cause of her misery!”

“Boys of twenty—soldiers, whose coats captivate more than their persons—hot and incantious youths, ever watching a door, or walking beneath a window, may, by their eyes, betray their success; or in sighing over a letter, forget to destroy it. But I am not of

that class. The name of a woman never passed my lips. Enough of this; you will trust me; nor will I be wanting in confidence to you. The king, so far from loving you, is tired of you; he cannot abide in constancy, but, like a butterfly, must change from flower to flower, sipping the sweets of each, and contaminating all by his touch. Have you not the common pride of your sex? Would you, the high Duchess of Cleveland, sink to the level of a girl in a sultan's harem, to be chosen for a moment, and neglected for a year? I tell you his wish is to avoid you for the future; another shares his momentary love, and you his gratified indifference."

"You say but this to win me to yourself; nor will I credit it."

"Swear to me to be as secret as the grave, and as devoted to me as you are to the king, and I will prove it. Consent to receive the affection I offer, and I will make all the pride, all the feelings of wounded honour rise and rebel against the sovereign, and, like a disaffected people, unite in a neglected heart to dethrone the unworthy object."

"What is this rapid throbbing of my heart, which, like the beating in a coward's breast, sickens my very frame, and makes it tremble with apprehension? He dare not *avow* his hatred; he cannot be so mean—so abjectly mean—as to have blazoned his indifference. I will consent, even to my greater disgrace—I will treasure the secret guarded in my heart—I will do all—all you have asked, or dared to hope—to share your confidence."

"You swear upon the honour of a woman."

"I swear."

"Peruse this letter; it is, you know, the king's own hand-writing. Now," continued Montagu, as he turned away, "I have won the woman, and have betrayed my sovereign."

The Duchess's eyes seemed vivid fire as she read the secret despatch—not a tear fell—not a burning drop bedimmed her sight; but, with the rapidity of lightning, the sheet was perused. "Above all, your excellency will keep the Duchess of Cleveland in Paris by every art you can invent. I do not want her near me. You know under what circumstances I protected her. She must not return, for I

would not be forced to convince her of difference—of my disgust.’ Your ex may preserve the letter,” said the with apparent unconcern, “and it remains yourself to guard the affection which disdains.”

CHAPTER VIII.

"My foot shall fight with all the strength thou hast;
And if mine arm be heaved in the air,
Thy grave is digged already in the earth."

HENRY VI.

"BE quiet as thought, good Vratz. I have as many bright visions passing before me as bilious men see of stars when they resolutely close their eyes. The Lapland witches prove true; and the penalty is far off. Quick! I remove to London this night; and the horses must be ready by eight of the clock. Let my other servants be kept in this hostelrie until my return. Well armed, and with youth and courage, we have little to fear from interruption by the way."

“ The devil most unceremoniously take all Lapland witches and all hair-brained counts,” said Vratz, as his master left the room, and he began his unwilling task. “ What a night of pleasure I had planned! By Thor himself, (and that’s a rash oath for a doubtful Christian,) I believe I would sell myself, as my master has done, to half the powers of darkness, to stay here a month! On the very night of the fête, and only having rested eight-and-forty hours, to go bumping in a hard saddle from dark to daylight, and daylight to dark, while Eugenie and Clementina are dancing and reveling with those, who, more fortunate than myself, my master does *not* care about!”

“ Is the Count Konigsmark within?” said a stranger in a loud voice.

“ If Count Charles John Von Konigsmark,” replied Vratz, “ were within, and not deaf or dead, he might hear the question and answer for himself. He must be dreaming of witchcraft, or he would hear that noise. What business have you with my master?”

“ Business that concerns him, and not you, sirrah. Tell him that Colonel Brett, the friend

of the English ambassador, desires his conversation for a short time."

"This is the king's jester," said Vratz, as he looked at him. "He's come to Paris to learn manners; and it's not much he seems to have benefited as yet. This way, and that door! Faith, as I am my master's best friend and travelling companion, I wish he would select better company."

"His excellency has commanded me to put this letter into your own hands," said Brett, when he was shewn into the apartment of Konigsmark; "it will present you properly to the Lady Algernon. With her resides the richest heiress in Europe. You had better make diligent inquiries at Montagu House; for she may be in London. His excellency begs of you to regard the daughter of the Countess with much scrutiny; for he has heard lately that her health was somewhat impaired, and on your return, his excellency solicits the further honour of your acquaintance. I see your retainers are preparing for your departure. This thought was somewhat sudden?"

"Even so; but I had intended a visit to

England. Pray does the Earl of Ogle intend passing the sea? You English fear not the passage, which to us is uncomfortable."

"Within a week it is the Earl's intention to visit the Lady Algernon and her ward. You will have the start," continued Brett, with a smile; "and being younger and much better favoured, may win a girl's heart before a rival can establish himself. I will not detain you."

"Commend me kindly to his excellency, and further oblige me by saying that I shall not fail in all he has desired. Farewell! I am much your debtor for this civility."

As the Colonel bowed with much politeness, the end of his sword touched Vratz's ear, who, taking up the remark his master had last made, said, "It is more than I am."

The Colonel, who, like his friend the ambassador, had a motive in everything he did, touched Vratz again; and as the Count retired, he put a Louis d'or in his hand. Vratz nodded his head familiarly, and said, "By my soul, you are right to put it in honest keeping! You seem to know how to apologise for an insult. I pray heaven, it be not a false coin."

That night, Konigsmark and Vratz left Paris for England. The Count rode a small, sturdy horse, being well armed and prepared at all points himself. Vratz followed close behind, riding another, and driving before him the one which was laden with the baggage, amusing himself by whistling and cursing; the first being a French cazonette; the second, continued anathemas against witchcraft and all who believed in it.

It was a long journey; for in those days travelling was in its infancy; the rapid growth of its manhood came many years afterwards. The inns were miserable hostelrys; the roads bad and somewhat dangerous; and people commended themselves to heaven before they undertook a journey, and made their wills, like desperate men, about to encounter danger. Travellers took the road as prepared for battle, as the soldier who lands on an enemy's coast; children embraced their parents, and wondered if ever they would return; wives kissed their husbands, and felt relieved by the thought that every preparation had been made for a long voyage; and unfaithful lovers felt assured

they could not be mutually surprised by any sudden re-appearance. It was necessity made men travel; few did it for pleasure. A stranger was followed in the streets as idle boys accompany punch. Men's minds were narrowed; and, like the Spaniard of Mexico to this day, they believed all the world under the dominion of their own monarch, or looked down upon other countries as trivial or worthless. Englishmen were much the same before the continent was open to them; and a farmer in Essex discredited the statement that the French ate beef or reared sheep; frogs were supposed to be their universal diet, and cats admitted as a luxury into the paltry list of their comestibles, which French cookery made palatable. On the other hand, El Dorado existed in South America, and children were taught to believe there was one town where the streets were paved with two-penny loaves, and the houses tiled with pancakes.

Konigsmark did not travel with his eyes shut, as the Spanish courier, Rafael, galloped from Vera Cruz to Mexico; neither did Vratz allow many minutes to elapse without forcing

a conversation. Every man, woman, or child whom they passed became subjects for his remarks. "There goes another girl, clattering in wooden shoes, and thanking God for a good dinner as she eats bread and gnaws an onion. French consciences and French stomachs are easily satisfied. And that fellow is a walking lie, for he wears contentment as a mask, whilst he swallows sour apples and eats a hard loaf. Holy Virgin! how I hate people who have not courage enough to grumble."

"It is an article, Vratz, in which you are not deficient. From the day we left Stockholm until now, I believe you have existed on contradictions and brandy."

"And a good reason why I should grumble. I was taken through cold and snow to sit out a whole day by myself, whilst you were selling your soul to the devil. And no sooner do I get to a Christian-like place, where the girls are pretty and the brandy excellent, than I am desired to pack up, and away we go on another wild-goose chase."

"Not so, Vratz; we are going now in chase of a woman."

"Then Heaven protect us, and a good supply of money. It will be while before I ever see Sweden again, far may it be to Calais?"

"We have yet a couple of days' journey before us. But why should distance annoy us? Do we not rest every night? And not at every town a beautiful church, where you may say your prayers at daylight, as we travel along, does not the view

"I crave your patience, good master, than you should rob me of mine. By all the witches at Torneatrask, ugliest country in Christendom. The woods and rocks of Finland are more romantic than these miserable, uncultivated plains; from Paris to Abbeville we have not met so fine or one piece of scenery which has made me so lively that you said, 'Villain Vratz, go in that direction.' Go on, ye sorry jade! My luggage and my sack will never weigh more than the straight legs of a horse. Are you tired? Do you carry a bishop's provender? If you would rather be in a stable eating

than honoured by carrying the court suit of Charles John Von Konigsmark."

"There, villain," said the Count, "look at that view. Is not that beautiful?"

It was the imposing sight from the high land of Montrenil, which had excited this remark. Far, far before them appeared a well-wooded country; and here and there spires of churches were visible, whilst the smoke of distant villages rose through the trees. The undulations of the ground gave a romantic cast to the scenery; and the last rays of the setting sun tinged the "unnatural hue which autumn plants upon the perished leaf." Konigsmark stopped to admire the view, and seemed to find great pleasure in scrutizing the landscape; whilst Vratz, impatient of delay, warned him that the sun would soon be down, and that there was no moon. Even in tracing the road from the hill it was already shaded and indistinct, whilst the lowing of the cattle as they disturbed the silence was declared by the unsentimental servant to be a howl for the lost daylight.

"Some people," said Vratz, "always go mad

about scenery; but to my eyes one h
like another; and a tree, whether in Fr
Sweden, is much about the same thin
heard young ladies talk of bold rocks
ting promontories, and weep over the
tion of hills and dales, trees and waterf
forgetting that it was not the mountai
enchanted them with all they saw, but t
ing eyes of those they loved, and wl
them, which brightened all around, an
the barren rocks and snow-topped mo
an earthly paradise. Whenever I hear
women talking of splendid scenery, I
ask how many men were of the party
how many have been since married. I
dark, Count, and we had better leave o
ing for the sun, and spur on to the ne
telrie."

Konigsmark started at his servant's
Together they slowly descended the hill
soon found that the rest of the journey
be performed in the dark. Spurring for
his horse, the Count bade his servant do
same, and drive on the one which carried
luggage. It was a calm evening, and soo

came dark. Vratz heard the clatter of his master's horse, and followed the sound, whilst the Count, cheering up his mind by a song, proceeded merrily along. Not far, however, had they got in the wood, when a shrill whistle was heard, and Konigsmark stopped short for Vratz to come close up to him. "Did you hear the whistle?" said the Count in a low voice.

"Not being deaf, I'll warrant I did," said Vratz, as he screwed himself into a comfortable position; "it's perhaps a shepherd returning home who is whistling his dog."

"Do you think, you obstinate boar, that it was the dog who whistled from the other side of the road in return? I owe you this reproach for the just one you gave me as I loitered on the hill observing the view. We may be beset here, and it would be an awkward occurrence."

"It would be an awkward occurrence, with a vengeance; for, if these freebooters took your court dress and scanty wardrobe, not to mention the little money that's left, you would cut but a sorry figure with your love the witches have found for you. I dare say now, you think it my duty to be killed for

your spangled jerkin. By my soul! them coming! and I'm glad of it. fight will quite restore my good-humour by your side, Count."

Konigsmark drew his long rapier, and out for the party advancing to stand, an account of themselves. To this answer was given, but the quick pace of four horses was heard. Konigsmark called Vratz to keep off the road, with the intention allowing the advancing party to ride past. Then regaining the road, it was his purpose to spur on, in order, if possible, to clear the way before he was attacked. Vratz had drawn his sword, and having placed the luggage and himself between him and the coming foe, he gave a shout of remembrance in favour of the blessed Virgin, and prepared for his peculiar fancy—a fight.

Anon came four men armed to the teeth at a gallant pace. Konigsmark halted by the side of the road, and the party passed him. He then cheered the coming thieves and flourished his long sword. The luggage horse stood still, its ears pricked up, undaunted at the charge, which threw the poor animal down, tumbling

over it one of the four. The rest instantly endeavoured to stop; but Konigsmark was behind them, and spurred to the assistance of his servant, who had set upon the nearest man, and who, calling on Thor and the Virgin, dealt most unwholesome wounds. The other two of the thieves, in turning to their comrade, rode over their friend who was sprawling on the ground, and the horse of one swerving at the fallen animal, nearly unhorsed his rider; before the latter could recover himself, Konigsmark had dealt him a blow which put him hors de combat.

“Yield, ye devil!” said the second man, as he rode against Vratz, and struck him a tremendous blow with a weapon not unlike a modern life-preserver, but the ball of which was of iron, with small spikes protruding. The arm of the Swede was rendered powerless; the sword fell from his nerveless grasp. Ten thousand stars seemed shooting before his eyes; a sickly sensation weakened his limbs, and he tottered in his saddle. The strong arm which had inflicted this blow was again raised to repeat

it, when the limb was paralysed by of Konigsmark, and the ruffian disab

There were but two now on horse Vratz, yielding to the stunning effect of the blow, fell forward on his horse and the darkness almost rendered objects indistinct. The last thief, believing the victory was his, swept from right to left his huge shout to his companions; whilst Konigsmark, keeping close to Vratz, called to his servant, in the hope of restoring him to his place, keeping his sword on the guard, move to the side whence came the shout. Both riders met and each struck fiercely. The swords met, and each steel was broken, and each remained unscathed. Konigsmark seized his adversary by the wrist and tried to unhorse him; but he found a born enemy of great strength, who gripped him by the doublet. Each now strove to overcome his adversary, and loud were the curses, and the blows bestowed by the hand. The riders swayed with their riders, and every nerve strained to gain the advantage. Konigsmark, young and vigorous, felt himself overpow

In vain he struggled with his powerful antagonist : he seemed like a centaur—a piece of his horse—and was immoveable. Gradually his strength began to fail, and he felt the more powerful grasp of his adversary as he rocked him in his saddle. “ Vratz !” he called ; “ Vratz ! to the rescue !” Scarcely had he spoken, when he felt his antagonist let go his hold, and heard him fall on the ground.

“ That’s for my headache,” said Vratz. “ Now, up, ye sorry jade,” he said, as he raised the luggage horse. “ Here’s a spare sword, Count, and the sooner we trot away the better.”

“ Thanks, Vratz ; this service will not be forgotten.”

CHAPTER IX.

“ ————What is this
That rises like the issue of a king,
And wears upon its baby brow, the round
And top of sovereignty?”

MACBETH

“ THIS letter, my dear Lady Algernon, be presented to you by Count Von Konig, a man of high birth in Sweden, and to the governor of Pomerania. It is his to form some idea of the higher class society in England, and of the beauty and vast domains of the aristocracy. I can therefore, do better for him than to present him—for the first, to yourself; and for the latter, to Petworth. He has been well received in Paris, to the society of which

added an ornament. His courtly manners will recommend themselves to you. Lord Ogle is still with us, impatient to receive your answer as to the proposition we made relative to my daughter, through the kindness of Mr. Locke. Be well assured that no marriage will be sanctioned by me that has not your approval, neither shall I flatter any man's proposition which meets not with your full encouragement.

"The Count will give you all details as to our movements, of which he is well aware; but do not be misguided by him relative to the Lord Ogle, as there seemed a jealousy between them, arising from the unbridled use of man's worst enemy—his wit. I pray you commend me lovingly and affectionately to my daughter, who, I trust, follows your injunctions rigidly and implicitly. She wants but a very few years to be of that age when the Countess of Sussex was married. Montagu desires his profound respects; and I have no words to express the gratitude of the

"COUNTESS OF NORTHUMBERLAND."

"Is the gentleman here who brought this letter?"

"He awaits your ladyship's answer. His servant mentions that he was assaulted in France, and is much more so."

"Peace! peace!—you chatter with a garrulous tongue of age. Give this to the Count's servant, and let him not forget the hospitality of an English house. Remind Herbert, that this is a foreigner who has been much of my country—let him not forget scoffing at the falsehoods of historical travellers."

The servant bowed respectfully, and withdrew.

"This letter pleases me much," said Algernon, as she re-perused it. "I can see no fears from the Count in respect to my daughter; and from him I may glean that Lord Ogle is of an age and bearing him for the splendour of the proposal."

Having folded the letter again, she gave orders for the Lady Elizabeth to be ready earlier than usual, for the reception of the Count, and she prepared herself for the next

by an additional quantity of paint, and an extra *mouche* or two upon her face.

"It is a magnificent chateau," said Vratz, as he returned; "and by my faith, that English ale is a becoming beverage, for I have a better colour in my face since I quaffed it. I saw about a score of footmen, a dozen pages, and maidens with rosy cheeks and demure looks without number. Some fellows there chinked money, and played at shuffle-board."

"You must not appear to want that," said the Count. "Take liberally, and play. If you lose, take care not to lose with it your temper; but let the dross go, as if it were plentiful at home, and only required the time to fetch it. I look not on you, Vratz, as my servant, but as my companion. I am indebted to you for my life, and I only use you now as my retainer, because otherwise I should not appear with an attendance worthy my station."

"You saved *my* life, good Count, and mine is more than ever at your disposal; the time may yet come when I may venture it again for your welfare. How can I serve you now?"

"There is a child, a daughter of the ambas-

sadress in Paris: mention that you heard her much spoken of in that city; then be discreet of further words, but carefully retain in your memory whatever may fall from the tongues of others. When the discourse shall turn upon other things, appear to follow the strain, but be sure to lead it back to her. I know when your tongue is unbridled you speak loosely: beware of mentioning the witches."

"Not for the world, good Count! for people are burnt here who even know their names. If that ale and cake do not betray my tongue or cloud my memory, I will not forget your commands."

"Above all things, Vratz, endeavour to commune with the coy maidens. Be lavish of your flattery; and with the tongue of one accustomed to travel, declare them superior to all others in the world. Here are some Swedish trinkets, valuable from their rarity. Give to each as far as you can; but to her who is most communicative give this ring. Say it has the charm of securing to the bearer the man she most wishes to captivate—say it was given by a cunning woman of Finland, but

that you hold another more powerful—excite their curiosity—pamper their credulity—but let all your mind be set upon the one object—the child. Tell the maids they are beautiful, and you need not fear returning without having learnt something. How do I look, Vratz?” said the Count, as he fastened his sword, the handle of which was richly studded, and was an heir-loom. Its antiquity was a charm, and a warrant of birth. “Does the dress become me? for I scarcely know myself in this French garb. This waistcoat is richly embroidered, and the lace of my ruffles of immense value. I fear me that my hair does not look so neatly arranged as I could wish, and my fashion of not using powder may appear at first the result of obstinate conceit.”

“There are few women,” said Vratz, “who can withstand that face and that tongue.”

Lady Algernon received him proudly, but courteously; and Konigsmark, already informed of the person with whom he was dealing, bowed with great deference, and using the manner of his country, inclined one knee,

and kissed the hand of the hostess; then retiring a step, he again bowed, and in becoming words expressed his gratitude to the Countess of Northumberland for having thus met his wishes by admitting him to the presence of the Lady Algernon, of whose suavity of manners and princely hospitality he had been well informed.

The Lady Algernon was captivated at once by his address, and with a slight colour, which made the artificial one more evident, she withdrew her eyes from Konigsmark's, and taking the Lady Elizabeth by the hand, presented her with much gravity to the Count. The child, with all the stiffness of her grandmother, and the dignity of a queen, curtsied lowly, whilst Konigsmark's face flushed a bright crimson and his words became inarticulate; he felt all his power gone, for it was the child—nay, even to the very dress, that had been shewn him. That child, as if urged by some inward, indescribable feeling, flushed also; and with an eye such as we see in those who love us, she met his gaze, and then timidly withdrew to her chair.

Recovered from the sudden paralysis of his powers, Konigsmark addressed himself to the Lady Algernon, who, apologising for the bashfulness of the Lady Elizabeth, begged that the Count would make Petworth his abode, until the solitude of the country and the irksomeness of its company might make him eager to seek a gayer residence in the metropolis. The invitation was eagerly accepted, and Vratz and his master became the inmates of Petworth.

Locke had been suddenly sent for to London, and the Duke of Monmouth had unexpectedly been recalled. That evening was spent in conversation. Konigsmark feeling satisfied that this rich heiress was the star of his destiny, was fluent of his words, and with consummate tact never complimented the Lady Elizabeth directly. At her request, he traced back the events of his life from his earliest remembrance. His mind, always romantic, was stored with all the poetry of his country. So faithfully did he picture its scenery, and so vividly did he paint its inhabitants, that every act and every landscape came before the listener's eyes; and never did he allow one opportunity to escape him, when

he paralleled the manners and customs of either nation, of paying a handsome, well-turned compliment to the Lady Algernon; whilst his eyes, glowing with animation, often met the abashed look of the Lady Elizabeth, who, like a bird fascinated by the snake, could not withdraw her gaze.

Neither did he seek to win his way by merely complimenting the vain woman who thus hospitably received him. He spoke of his wish to travel, consulted her as to the country most profitable in resources, and bowed with deference to her judgment. Young as he was, he was well tutored in love's ways. He knew that to succeed he should always make the object attacked apparently superior to himself, whilst he took care to place himself so highly in the woman's estimation, that she raised herself as it were to his level when her opinion was consulted. Scenes of adventure, all of desperate bravery, and all to shield the innocent and defend the oppressed, were coined to allure the attentive ears of Lady Elizabeth—hasty sketches of wars, even from the time of Gustavus Vasa—anecdotes of

sacrifices scarcely credible in nations struggling into independence—the bright scenes of the French court, and the manners of that trivial people, succeeded each other in inexhaustible rapidity; and when the hour came for the retirement of the Lady Elizabeth, although restraint dictated the formal curtsy, nature prompted a more generous salute, and the young girl, quite enamoured of the handsome stranger who had beguiled the hours usually tediously long, into those, alas! too rapidly fleeting, offered her hand, saying that she trusted the Count Von Konigsmark would so far be pleased with Petworth and its hospitality as to stay long enough to conclude his account of Pomerania and of his uncle's deeds in war.

No sooner had the Lady Elizabeth retired, than Lady Algernon made inquiries respecting Lord Ogle. Konigsmark did not seek directly to undervalue him; he praised his appearance, whilst he slightly depreciated his more sterling qualities; and whilst giving him the character of a man of high ton and fashion, did not fail to notice his greedy avarice, easily recognised in his disposition for play; and he

whispered away his talents, whilst recently applauded his wit. But trivial in Lady Algernon's eyes, Konigsmark could not attack his birth, Algernon thought, as many other si think, that a stupid nobleman was than an intellectual parvenu—the will weigh down talent, and “repent coach-and-six” is far preferable to monious interchange of love in a ret in the country.

Supper was served with great splendour and the room lighted as if to receive a hundred guests. Well-schooled in the art of dissimulation, Konigsmark made no allusion to the splendour of his display, but seemed to regard it as a matter of course, which he had been accustomed to. He was not lost on Lady Algernon, who traced the proof that he had from his infancy the inmate of a palace.

A week passed rapidly away, during which time Konigsmark had travelled many miles on the Downs of Sussex; and whilst in the country, improving his own mind, and becoming more assured of the growing greatness of the

the sterling qualities of its yeomen, the mark of the freeman stamped upon the countenance, and the becoming pride of all who claimed to be Englishmen, he forgot not the star of his destiny, and spent many an hour in ingratiating himself with her; and so far improved his opportunities, that the child, reposing all confidence in him, groaned over her isolated captivity, and sighed for a more cheerful life, when the companionship of her own class would not be withheld from her. Dangerous was it to Lady Elizabeth to listen to the serpent tongue of Konigsmark, who on all occasions entered into her views, and sighed when he thought so beautiful a girl should be married not to the man of her choice, but to the man selected by others. These seeds of insubordination were sown in whispers; for Lady Elizabeth was never alone, either two or three attendants were within call, or Lady Algernon herself was present. When such a familiarity is established that the woman listens to a whisper, she is preparing her own downfall, and allowing the undermining power of vice to assail her tottering virtue. What is said

in a whisper, speaks more to the the loudest voice, supported by tr cerity.

It was on the seventh day that F heard that Lord Ogle had left Par on his road to Petworth. He was t by his father, the Duke of Newcast don, and was then to be received in by Lady Algernon. Lady Elizabeth told that the Earl of Ogle was he husband, provided he met with the tion of her grandmother, and this a was nearly certain, as he was the elc the Duke, and no higher rank cou tained. Secretly did the Lady Eliza loved that which was nearest to her, v intervals her detestation of the man she was destined; and Konigsmark r the opportunity of poisoning her, likening the beautiful and intellectual, falsely called her, to a handsome su broidery, sold to the highest bidder, w wear her as an ornament, until it was co to cast it aside; and on the last d his departure, when he culled a flo

presented it to her, he felt her young hand return the pressure of his, and her eyes sparkled with emotion as he expressed, in the dangerous whisper, his ardent hope that the warm hand then again and again pressed might one day be his. A sudden blush crimsoned the child's cheek, and as she lifted her eyes to his, he read at a glance all the satisfaction they expressed.

Vratz's information, culled from the very best sources, the lady's attendants, was not such as would heighten a lover's fire. The Lady Elizabeth was, according to the information obtained, as proud as the old woman who protected her. She never had a favourite; not even a dog was fondly patted by her delicate hand. She was cold, formal and conceited; and with the arrogance of supposed superiority, treated all around her with contempt and indifference. Not one spoke well of her; she was declared pettish and perverse; and only condescended to smile when everything was in accordance with her wishes. Moreover, even in Konigsmark's eyes she was not handsome. Her hair was red; her eyes were neither of

the dark clearness of the Spanish, and the blue of colder climates. She was still a girl, and even the rash adventurer helped feeling the greatness of the sacrifice she was about to offer at the shrine of love.

"Still, Vratz," he exclaimed, after a pause, "she is prodigiously rich, and yet abominably poor; indeed, if it were not for an occasional turn of fortune's wheel at the gaming table, we might before this have been lodged in the cold palace of my enemies, have been condemned to march about in chains, to be shot at for a mark, and my name will leave the impression I have made in the world on its own way, and returning to Paris I must settle my finances *somehow* before I visit her. As yet, the girl cannot be married, she is too young; and we have time enough to

CHAPTER X.

"I know you all, and will awhile uphold
The unyoked humour of your idleness."

HENRY IV.

It was the second day after the departure of Konigsmark from Paris that Montagu amused his wife with reading aloud the following letter from Lady Algernon, but he took good care that neither Brett nor Lord Ogle should be present.

"Your letter, Mr. Montagu, addressed to Mr. Locke, was read to me, as far as certain parts of it which related to myself and my granddaughter. It would have been more becoming in you to have written to me; for, however flattered I may feel from the, I hope,

just encomiums bestowed upon me
letter, which seemed to give great pleasure
Mr. Locke in reading, yet I think in all
relative to my granddaughter's interests
secrecy would be better maintained if
subject were only known to the family.
Duke of Newcastle (remember he is
second duke) can in no way pretend
lofty birth of the heiress of the house
and although the Earl of Ogle is his son
may never succeed to the title, in which
it would be a lamentable affair, as that
Elizabeth would not be a Duchess.
of fortune, there can be no comparison
therefore, as we have the superiority
and wealth on our side, the marriage
considered a great condescension on our
I think, therefore, it should be agreed
other side that all their interests should
be used (and our promises be retracted
fail) to induce the king to give a
bride. The Duke of Monmouth would
be honoured by so doing; but the king's
condescension would, in a slight degree, cost
little honour upon the affair. I pray

over this Earl of Ogle, that I may look at him. I hope he is well favoured, and has the manners and bearing of the high court party of France; and he can bring with him the newest modes of ladies' apparel, for in the making of these our milliners are sadly deficient, and somewhat barbarous. I hope I have written this letter so clearly that it cannot be misunderstood, for I am as yet in no wise disposed to give my consent to the match; and I shall of course take the greatest care that all my granddaughter's fortune is tightly settled on herself. Present me kindly to your lady; and if the Earl of Ogle is near you, acquaint him that I may be reconciled to his visit to Petworth if he comes accompanied by his father, the *second* Duke of Newcastle."

"There," said Montagu, "is a letter that would puzzle the most subtle diplomatist of Europe; what with the contradictions, the honours, fortunes, and fashions, I doubt if the Duchess of Cleveland herself could unravel the meaning of it."

"That hated woman, Montagu, that cast-off mistress of a loose monarch, is for ever on

your lips. I would she were absent from France with her child, and I thus saved from the pain of seeing my husband *necessarily* associated with so disreputable a character."

"Jealous already," said Montagu to himself. "I wonder much she is so quick sighted as to see that I prefer the mother to the young and prettier daughter. What are we to do with Ogle?—are we to send him to this cross-grained guardian of the Percies? Look you, Brett," he said, as he left his wife, without waiting her reply, "Ogle must give more; the Lady Algernon resolutely withholds her consent. Look, here is the letter." And he shewed the few words in which the guardian had expressly stated her non-consent. "Go to him, and with your most cunning speech instil into his ears that it can still be done; and that if he raises his price a few thousands more, I pledge myself that within a week he shall be on his way, with letters that shall ensure the attainment of his object. Inflammé his jealousy of the Swede: you are an adept at that, and worthy of the embassy. I am annoyed, Brett, and feel how insignificant I am, for I cannot disguise my feelings. An

ambassador should be a walking lie ; he should appear calm and unmoved even when thwarted in his views ; his countenance should never be the index of his heart ; and his hand should grasp that of his avowed foe with all the sincerity of true friendship. Quick, Brett, and serve me as the right hand of my own body. We must have money ; the expenses of the Duchess are enormous, and the Earl of Sussex contributes to her daughter's wants with a most niggardly and parsimonious hand."

The Earl of Ogle, who had never seen the heiress of all the Percies, soon fell into Brett's views ; the requisite sum was promised to be paid, and when all was signed, Montagu informed Brett of the trick he had practised. Brett was liberally rewarded, and the Earl of Ogle was dispatched with proper letters from the Countess, who, in reality, was not privy to the scheme her husband had adopted, but saw in her future son-in-law a very proper match for her daughter, who, although too young for marriage, might be affianced, and in a year or two would be as old as the young Countess of Sussex.

On Lord Ogle taking his departure from Paris, he received many instructions from Montagu as to his behaviour with Lady Algeron; for a person not prepared to adopt the most insincere line of flattery, could never succeed with her. Montagu was anxious for this match himself, as he saw in the bridegroom a man by no means competent to cope with him, and who could easily be wheedled into a very necessary liberality; and money was his object. Even the immense fortune which he had obtained by his marriage with the Countess of Northumberland, and his large salary as minister, were insufficient for his expenditure; for he kept a noble house, was a man much given to society, and supported the dignity of his country by the splendour of his entertainments. A poor man should never be an ambassador, although his alliance and birth may rank him amongst the highest of subjects; for, abroad, the country is represented by its minister, and the splendour of an embassy contributes much towards the entertainment of a proper respect for it.

The quick eye of the Countess of North-

umberland soon witnessed the various changes of her husband's countenance. It is true, in the time of Charles II., immorality was somewhat of a recommendation; the licentious monarch was too liberal in his notions to bar the progress of others who followed his example. Montagu was, therefore, a great favourite, although he did remove his handsome wife, and Charles had confided to him a secret, which he would have been loth to entrust to the mind of another. Whilst it was known to Montagu alone, he knew where to avenge himself if that confidence were betrayed. Directly two people are entrusted with a secret, it ceases to be one.

Charles was a very superstitious, gay, and immoral monarch. It appears that, before the Restoration, he had consulted an astrologer, who predicted, with some accuracy, the time of his return. Weak minds are always credulous, and Charles is another proof of the truth of the saying. Ever since his return, he had constantly sent over to Montagu, to cause the astrologer to re-consult his horoscope; and with all the blindness of the Persian monarch,

who takes physic only when there is a favourite or favourable conjunction, Charles took his different mistresses in accordance with the state of Venus and Mars, or rather as the astrologer predicted.

This was the great secret of Montagu, and it was evidently the most powerful he could possess, by which to retain or get rid of the Duchess of Cleveland. She, although now the actual mistress of Montagu, and living almost openly under his protection, corresponded with the king, and was incessant in her endeavours to return to him. As long, therefore, as it suited the variable love of Montagu, the king was informed that the astrologer had consulted the stars, that his separation from the Duchess was inevitable, and that a future conjunction under the present aspect of the heavens would be followed by great and disastrous events, to the great prejudice of the monarch, and to the loss of the affections of his subjects; and Charles believed it to the utmost letter. As yet, Montagu had not told the Duchess this; he had succeeded through his cautious manner of

exciting her curiosity on another subject, and now so enamoured had he become of her, that he scarcely ever left her.

Who can speak the throbbings of an affectionate heart? Who can describe the chilling blight of indifference, which crushes the fond hopes of a dutiful, an affectionate wife? Who can fathom the misery of her who, wrapt in one object—seeing in it a being in her estimation far above others—loving it with all fervour, adoring it in secret, and worshipping it with eyes radiant with love, feels the first pang of doubt, which, like the poison of the envenomed dart, rushes with icy coldness through her blood? There are none to witness her tears shed in solitude; none can feel that sickening of the heart which overwhelms all her energies; none can hear the deep-drawn sighs, and none witness the sudden starts occasioned by horrid dreams which haunt the couch of the neglected victim. True love repines in solitude; it withdraws itself from all intercourse but with its own heart; and the tears which spring from that heart, as from a fountain, alone prevent its

breaking, by relieving it of those waters of bitterness which would otherwise overwhelm it.

The Countess of Northumberland sincerely loved Montagu, and that love directed her aright. She felt the cold indifference with which he listened to her. He became irregular in his habits; and to each reproach, if love can ever reproach the object it adores, she was answered, that business of state, unfit to be mentioned even to his wife, necessarily withdrew him from her society. This, with every outward shew of annoyance, he regretted, as it debarred him, he said, from the pleasure he had always experienced near her; and thus, with the cunning of the experienced falconer, he threw out the lure of love to charm her to his arms again. Nor was he unsuccessful; for much too rejoiced was the Countess to cheat herself for one moment, and to enjoy once more all the belief, all the certainty of his unaltered affection. Montagu was unrivalled in the art; for although he roamed about from flower to flower, sipping the sweets of each, and constant to none, yet he was aware of the

blessings of home, where the eyes of one brightened at his coming, and her cheek was ever burning to receive the kiss of seeming affection: for he was wise enough to endeavour to deceive the public, before whom, at his own house, he was ever kind and obliging to his wife.

Shortly after the departure of Lord Ogle, the Countess, with a careless air, asked him where he had been, that he had so long delayed his coming home. The question was put apparently with a desire to give Montagu an opening for his sprightly conversation.

“ I am just returned from Versailles, where I have been nearly the whole day. There were crowds anxious to thrust themselves upon their sovereign. After my reception, I walked in the gardens, and am but this instant returned.”

Montagu, as he gave this trivial account of his time with all the apparent sincerity of truth, never heeded the eyes of the Countess, which at first were fixed upon him, but which soon filled with tears as he continued his

details; at last, overcome, in spite of all exertions to resist it, she gave one sob, rose, and left the table.

"The Countess is somewhat indisposed to-day," remarked Montagu, "and we must endeavour to surmount our grief at her absence; the weather, I suppose, has overcome her, and the atmosphere promises a thunder-storm."

"I think it does," said Brett, who, with the liberty of one tolerated for his useful services, gave an intelligible meaning to his words by the cunning cast of his eye.

"I trust, however," said Montagu, "that her indisposition will soon pass away, and that she may be enabled to meet the friends who are coming to her reception. Has there been anything new, Brett, since my departure?"

"Nothing, but the return of the Swede, who, it appears, arrived last night, and in his desperate hope endeavours to increase his means, was very successful at play. He desired his best regards to your excellency, and mentioned that the Lady Elizabeth was in perfect health, as was also the Lady Alger-

non ; moreover, he begged me to excuse him to your excellency, as business of much importance obliged him immediately to leave Paris for Madrid. His room was covered with rich dresses, and money seemed very plentiful with him, as it was liberally distributed. It is his intention, if he does not leave Paris to-night, to be present at her excellency's reception, but his eagerness to set out on his journey denies me the hope of his coming."

Splendid was the *soirée* of the Countess—all of high note in Paris attended—all the beauty, all the *élite* were there, and amongst them the Duchess of Cleveland and the Countess of Sussex. The latter attracted much attention from her youth and beauty, and her infantine manners.

The chilling manner of the Countess of Northumberland, as she bowed formally to the Duchess of Cleveland, was remarked by many; nor was the haughty glance of the Duchess unnoticed. To the Countess of Sussex more condescension was evinced; but beyond the coldest recognition, not a word passed. Montagu saw it, and Brett was aware

it would happen—he attributed the sudden illness of the Countess to the right cause. Most studiously did the Countess avoid her guest; and quite in vain did Montagu endeavour to reassure the Duchess. She sat in all her brilliant display of the richest jewellery, the wonder and the admiration of many; whilst some, whose envy and jealousy could not be concealed, reviled her publicly, and vented their impatient objections to her society, whilst their own lovers were within hearing. Still she was beautiful. As Mrs. Palmer, she had been admired — as a Duchess, she was courted—and as the personal friend of her sovereign, she ranked, in her own estimation, as more favoured than the Countess.

When all the cold formality of the evening was past—when the hollow expressions of friendship or regard had been interchanged—when lovers had ceased their importunities, and the voice of passion had died in the eager ears of mistresses—Montagu entered his room. On his table was a letter: it ran thus—“Until this day I believed every word which fell from

your lips. Unwillingly am I undeceived. I saw you, myself, enter the hotel of the King's mistress at eleven o'clock—I passed as you came out at two o'clock—at four, you were there again—you were in this house at six—how could you have been at Versailles? Alas! I am now as miserable as even the heartless object of your love could wish. She has estranged the affections of my husband, and I have lost my confidence in him for ever, since I have heard his own lips pronounce a cold, deliberate falsehood."

CHAPTER XI.

"On him! on him! Look you how pale he glares!
His form and cause conjoined—preaching to stones
Would make them capable ——"

HAMLET.

"I WOULD rather be the companion of a pedlar, and walk through Poland in the hopes of cheating a Jew of Varsovie, than I would ride by the side of a man who believes in witches, and who talks of the star of his destiny. Have we not," continued Vratz, as he addressed Konigsmark, "ridden far enough to-day, that we must still continue our onward course, without one word to break the monotony of the journey? Are you going to the Pillars of Hercules—to reside on the summit

of the Gib-al-taric,* where the apes are so plentiful, that they reach from the top to the bottom by holding on each other's tails—or are you going to Morocco to buy a black mistress?"

Eight days had now elapsed since Konigsmark left Paris, and he had many a weary mile to travel before his journey would be ended. He had scarcely spoken a word, for his mind was fixed upon the Lady Elizabeth, who he was convinced resembled the girl seen in the magic bowl, and who, he was well aware, was much pleased with his society, for she had given the best proof a child could give, by straining her ears to catch each anecdote he told.

As Vratz asked his question in a louder voice than usual, Konigsmark answered him. "We are neither going to Gibraltar nor Morocco—though it may be that before we return to Sweden we shall have seen both. We are on our road to Italy, and I hope to return you to your countrymen, singing a happy song, with

* The proper name of Gibraltar.

your finances plentiful, and with every comfort to confer on a wife."

"I'll have no wife," said Vratz. "Marriage is a pair of horses pulling along the heavy lumbering vehicle of life: unless you both pull together, one gets galled, and frets, whilst the other fattens in idleness, or kicks, out of mischief. If I had not attached myself to you, good Count, I should have been at home now, instead of here, following your inclination rather than my own."

"You will see the world, Vratz, and rub off some of your barbarous notions. What can you want more than you have? Name it; and if I can give it you, you are certain of it."

"I want to go to sleep. Can you give me that? I want to rest my back, which is bent double from fatigue. I want to feel sound where I am raw. I want some strong spirits to brighten my own."

Konigsmark was now on the borders of Italy: before him was a lone post-house, and as he had changed his horses at every post, he thought of doing so here.

On arriving at the door, he called loudly

for the host, and after having been summoned several times by Konigsmark, and cursed most seriously by Vratz, a thin, sharp-featured man appeared.

"Did the witches tell you of this animal?" said Vratz. "By the blessed Virgin! I think my eyes never rested upon worse features than those, saving always Charles Borosky, who was manufactured expressly to shew how consummately ugly a man might be, and yet be human."

Vratz's opinion of the host was shared by Konigsmark. The man before them appeared the veriest anatomy which a heart could animate. He was small in stature, his face was ugly in the extreme, and his small, red, ferrety eyes seemed alive only with an unearthly vengeance. The scowl of the creature was frightful, and there did not appear one touch of benevolence in his features. "I think," said Konigsmark, as he listened to the remark of Vratz, "that you will not feel much inclination to sleep here, or to rest your back either."

"I should be afraid," replied Vratz, "to be

in that fellow's company for five miles, I would either cut my throat, or I should throw him into one of my boots, and tramp off to death. Let's move on. This is no good spirit, placed here to seize all travellers.

"Horses, directly," said Konigsmark, "I wish to get on to Turin to-night, or at least to get to some decent inn before the storm overtakes us."

"Can you ride those you have any? Is mercy so much a stranger to your heart, that you would kill the poor creatures who have borne your heavy weight till now?"

"They are as tired of us, good man," said Vratz, "as I am of you. Order them to go, whilst I unlade this poor creature from his shaking tail and extended nostrils of fatigue."

"You cannot," said the postmaster, "I am sorry, Konigsmark, "go further on your own horse; you shall have none of my horses. In the storm that will burst; then neither you nor your impudent varlet who accompanies you shall save my cattle from the floods, or from the wolves they would catch. Here is my house."

but little calculated to afford a sufficiency for so great a man as you would pretend to be, or as your insolent serving-man aspires to be."

"Listen, little toad," said Vratz; "if you cannot keep a civil tongue, I will save you the trouble of getting any further beatings, by cutting out the member which is made to articulate your impertinence. Get the horses, or by the Virgin, I'll put the saddle on your skeleton-back, and make you carry a heavier burthen than your own lantern carcase."

The postmaster took no notice of Vratz's threat, but quietly remarking that he had given the only answer he intended to give, he pointed to an empty shed, and returned to the house, leaving Konigsmark to follow the bent of his own inclination.

"We have nothing for it, Vratz, but to make the best of this for the night. It wants but an hour or two of sunset, and after dark I am not inclined to tempt fortune. We have had one adventure, which is quite sufficient; and these Italian brigands are sharp hands at the stiletto, and strike in the dark without asking for the money first."

"As you like, Count; but I will say an extra prayer or two, and sleep with a cravat which would defy a razor. It's a coffin ready made—a grave ready dug. I never cast eye upon a more villanous hovel, with starvation as a moving sign in the host. Go on, nags. But, by my soul, I will have one hand upon my rapier and the fire-arms ready."

"Can we have anything to eat?" said Konigsmark, addressing the host, who was seated near a table opposite to a woman who still retained some marks of beauty, but which age had greatly contributed to obliterate.

"If you can buy it, and cook it," replied the man, "you may eat it; we have nothing here but that which is sufficient for ourselves. We are seldom honoured by great men's presence, and if it were not that I feared an accident to my horses, I would rather be without it now."

Konigsmark now adopted a different tone; he spoke of his readiness to pay handsomely, and to share his supper with those who so kindly sheltered him during the inclement weather, which had already begun to burst. His manner had an evident effect upon the

woman ; and after some few words exchanged in a language quite foreign to Konigsmark's ears, or uttered with such rapidity and such strange pronunciation as to render it unintelligible, he was asked if he wished it immediately, or could wait an hour ; because if the latter, it would be better in quality and more in quantity. Vratz, who entered at the moment, voted lustily for waiting, adding to his master in Swedish—"These vermin only live upon their friends—dead cats, distempered dogs, or half-starved rats and mice." It was therefore agreed to wait, and Konigsmark and Vratz soon conveyed the scanty luggage into a room which was destined as the sleeping apartment of the Count, Vratz being told by the host that he might find out the softest plank, and stretch his menial limbs thereon.

Konigsmark, ever alive to the privileges of the softer sex, began to pay some well-timed compliments to the hostess, who was now alone, the miserable anatomy having left the hovel, and directed his steps along a narrow pathway, which passed over the summit of a rising ground behind the house. Vratz, in the mean-

time, examined well every hole or c could find; he stamped upon the floor its firmness, and occasionally ran his point through any crevice; he moved, and cautiously scrutinized every cha every article of furniture; he ascertained the wall of the Count's room formed the o of the house, and that the chamber was accessible by one door; he examined also panelling, and having some doubts as to thickness, ascertained the impossibility of forming a concealing place, by passing his sw through it, and going to the other side to lo at the point. The windows fastened well on t inside, and the different apertures were t small to admit of any one creeping in; bu resolving to make security doubly sure, and remembering how very thin the landlord was, he placed some of the luggage on a table, and entirely blocked up the window. The only thing he could not guard against was the door-way, for there was no door to the room. On all other points he was satisfied; and when he considered the insignificant height and strength of the landlord, and the benevolent expression of

his wife's countenance, he wondered why he had taken so much trouble when so much fatigued.

Konigsmark could glean but little from the lady, for in a short time the landlord returned, bringing with him a side of mutton and some eggs: one or two bottles also were hung to his girdle, and from a sack which he carried he produced some bread and some vegetables. The fire soon burnt briskly, and a grill began to rejoice the eager nose of Vratz. In the cookery both landlord and landlady assisted; one looked to the eggs, which were poached with much care and cleanliness; and between the intervals of turning the meat on the grill, a cloth was laid, and a degree of comfort began to appear. Vratz never took his eyes from off the landlord once, for he anticipated some perfidy, it being quite evident to him that such a man could not be honest. The landlady wore on her countenance a certain degree of resignation and mildness, which assorted strangely with the sharp, revengeful features of the ferret-eyed landlord.

It was now about six o'clock, and the darkness had set in; the wind howled without, and

the rain fell in torrents; floods of water by the hovel, which seemed in danger swept away from its resting-place; a lightning was followed by a tremendous instantaneous roar of thunder, thus arising that it was in the immediate vicinity. Apparently accustomed to these magnificent outbreaks of nature, the host continued his cooking without the slightest emotion or alarm until all was prepared, and his guests were seated at table.

"An honest man's intentions," said the landlord, "are often misinterpreted. Had I allowed you to proceed, the present storm would either have swollen the rivers to such a height as to have rendered them impassable or the road would have become so slippery that the horses could not have advanced. Instead of this comfortable shelter, you might have been rolling in mud, or struggling in a cataract."

This was said in so plausible a manner, that a stronger-minded man than Konigsmark might have been deceived; but Vratz could not be changed from his opinion—which was

more confirmed by the supper—that the host perceived they were travellers of some note, rather scantily protected, and had therefore resolved to feed them well, in order to induce sleep, and then to cut their throats, and share the plunder with some other gentleman whom he expected every moment to arrive.

“The wind,” said the woman, “is very high; we had better secure the doors before it gets worse; no other travellers can arrive now, for the road is impassable, and these gentlemen will amuse themselves better when all is snug and secure.”

“Now, then,” said Vratz, to his master, “they are going to nail down the coffin-lid, and I will take care it is made secure enough for them, as well as for us. Let me assist you, signor,” said Vratz; “I am accustomed to work, and like to see all safe before I go to bed. None but devils or brigands would be abroad in such a night as this; and as we are not partial to such company, we will decline the honour of a visit from either.”

“I can do it myself,” said the host; “but as you seem particularly anxious to get wet,

pray accommodate yourself—you w
that is requisite prepared to your h

Vratz, not caring about the storm
the shutters on the outside, and th
ing, made them equally secure withi
done this, he took a long and dee
wine, and gave himself up to th
sant reflections which come over a
in a lone place, where his throat m
and he may be buried and be for
five minutes.

Konigsmark carried on the con
with much spirit. The hostess rela
dotes of the various nobility who liv
vicinity; and at every pause—and s
sioned by a louder gust of wind c
creased pattering of the rain—the h
that air of triumph worn always b
prophet, looked cunningly at V
much as to say—"A pretty night
human being to be abroad in!—ah! b
mischief will be done, and some travel
be lost even when they think themsel
secure."

Vratz was not addicted to any p

moderation in either wine or brandy ; but being unable to divest himself of the notion that some mischief was abroad, he drank cautiously ; whilst Konigsmark, who had scanned the pleasing countenance of the hostess, and who flattered himself he had made some impression not unfavourable, forgot his alarm, and occasionally helped himself, and passed the bottle to Vratz.

"One might drown himself in that wine," said Vratz, "before he could get intoxicated ; but much as I relish its rich taste, I will not touch another drop. The time has crept on, Count, and if we are to get any sleep, we had better prepare for it now."

Konigsmark rose, and wishing the host and hostess a good night, and expressing himself pleased with the fare so liberally supplied, he retired to his room.

"Now, Count, we will make every preparation for a siege," said Vratz ; "it is a lone place, and no assistance can we get ; we must fight behind our own walls, and make this miserable chair a fortification. God send us a happy delivery, as the judges say when they are going to try a nobleman. I wonder if they

bury us far from the door, or cut small pieces, and carry us out in bags.

Whilst he thus ran on ruminating, his master's drawn sword by his side, the fire-arms to be ready and convenient, finding it impossible to make any stir for the entrance to the room—for there was none—he drew his long rapier, and lay himself down with the saddle bags and with the saddles arranged by the solitary chair, he said his prayers devoutly, and fell asleep.

Vratz had well contrived his contrivance, in any rate, to give his master warning; so that no one in the dark could have taken him without tumbling over the faithful dog, and as both had some little rest, their sleep was light, and liable to be disturbed by the smallest noise. All sounds had now ceased; the wind howled round the house, occasionally shaking the fastenings of the windows; whilst then a flash of lightning blazed in the sky, and the thunder roared without. A fearful night. Not once, but twice

had Vratz sprung upon his feet and seized his rapier, as a squall of wind gave movement to the shutters. At last, tired of these sudden alarms, and being satisfied that the wind was his fancied enemy, he fell into a sound sleep, and gave notice of it by snoring.

It was now close upon midnight, and the scanty lamp already began to flicker; all was hushed; the wind died suddenly away, and such was the stillness, that the lightest-footed animal which nature has adapted to live by stealth, would have created a sound in its motion. The deep breathing of Vratz was now louder than any sound without, for the storm seemed to have lulled into a calm; by degrees, the light grew fainter and fainter, until the first stroke of the clock as it sounded the hour of midnight, when it suddenly went out. As the last stroke sounded, a bright light startled Konigsmark, and he sat up in his bed; he called aloud to Vratz, but no noise disturbed his repose.

“What are you?” said Konigsmark — “whence come you?—and why at this hour of night, and in this lone and dreary abode?—do you seek to perpetrate some horrid crime?”

As he said this, he seized his fire-arms, and pointed them at a figure which stood close to the foot of the bed. There was an awfully supernatural appearance in all and everything around. The room was light as day, and yet no lamp was burning; the figure, human to all appearance, had gained admission without disturbing the precautions of Vratz, and the sound of Konigsmark's voice was bounded in its power; there seemed a magic circle through which it could not break; whilst the storm, which had raged in noisy violence, had ceased, and the stillness of death had taken its place; even as Konigsmark spoke, the words appeared to return to him, and his voice seemed powerless even to extend itself beyond the narrow limits of his bed.

"I seek not to harm you," replied the figure; "and neither would I frighten you. I come not to you with stony, glassy eyes, or dead and livid cheeks; neither come I, glaring forth the immortality of hell, frenzying your intellect by my appearance; but here, as I lived and moved not yet one month ago, do I come from my

near abode, to urge a worldly retribution. Put down those arms, and let that sword lie quiet; you could not kill the dead, neither could you wound the immaterial body which appears to your eyes, but which is nothing to the touch."

"Vratz, awake—awake! and witness that I am mad, or that I see a ghost, which paralyses every nerve, and makes me weak and timid as a frightened child. Vratz, I say!—awake, and to the rescue!"

"Why call on those who cannot hear?" continued the phantom—"why startle with fear, when none would frighten you? Here all is the calmness of the grave, and your voice is powerless, whilst mine is heard; the breath of the dead can hush even the violence of the storm. I come not to upbraid you, but I come to warn you of those who, denying me the blessing of existence, murdered me in that bed in which you lie, and under which I am buried; it was your living weight disturbed the silence of my tomb, and bound me, as it were, closer to the cold earth: none has ever slept here since I was foully, brutally mur-

dered, and to the first I appear, to call for worldly justice."

Konigsmark, who cared nothing for danger, and who feared no living man, gradually felt his icy blood resuming its warmer current. The aspect of the being before him had nothing terrible in it, the mild, plaintive manner of its speech appealed to his kindness rather than his fears, and his courage, checked for a moment by the unnatural glare, now returned to him. He placed aside his fire-arms and rapier, and fixing his now undaunted look upon the phantom, said—"Speak, and Count Konigsmark swears to do as you desire, if such is not against his conscience as a Christian, and his feelings as a man. Speak, I am prepared to hear."

"Those with whom you supped have hands dark with human blood, and she whose mild and once lovely face attracted your eyes, did this! Look at the deep wound her greedy dagger made, and see, as if doubting the result, how, again and again, she drove the sharp point into my very heart; whilst, as if the voice of one dying could reach the furthest

extremity of the world, (for a guilty conscience fears reproach at unmeasured distance) the miserable thing who now usurps my place, held over my mouth that very pillow on which your head has rested. My grave is unquiet—no holy offices hallowed my funeral, and, until justice is done, my restless spirit is condemned to visit this room at the hour of midnight, chilling itself in the cold air, unnaturally living.”

“What would you have me do—how can I serve the dead?”

“By making the living atone for their crime, and by having this poor earthly frame, which once lived and breathed as you do now, restored to holy and consecrated earth. It is reported, and credited, that on my return from Turin, during a dark night, I was set upon and murdered by bandits, that my wealth, which I then carried with me, was stolen, and my body buried in the deep recesses of the wood, and is yet unfound. Francesca gave it to her paramour, and his fate is bound up with hers, but under this bed my body shall be found, when you reveal the truth.”

“How shall I know that, to-morrow, when I

awake, this has not been all a dream—that the stomach overloaded with unwholesome meal has not produced a horrid nightmare—or that the wine, of which perhaps I have too freely partaken, has not caused a restless sleep, and that dreams, bringing with them unearthly shapes and most unnatural phantoms, have been the result?”

“ There shall be a sign which you shall never lose—there shall be a token which shall never be removed—there shall be that which no human hands made, and which none shall imitate or possess, for none shall ever see its every part at the same moment. Sleep on now in security; those who did this deed never sleep, and each gust of air brings with it all the apprehension of tardy justice coming on the wings of retribution; their existence is one horrid foreboding, and they clutch each other, fearing one moment’s darkness. They will do no further murder, for they have not the courage to step from their beds and listen to their own footfall. Farewell; I credit your word. Sleep in security, for the dead shall watch over you. I go.”

A sudden gust of wind announced the returning storm. Again all the tumult of the elements burst upon the ear, the room was left in total darkness, and Vratz jumped up, and called to the Count, to warn him that the light was out.

"Sleep, sleep, good Vratz!" said Konigsmark; "we have nothing to fear but the violence of the storm; the old house seems to shake with its fury, and the gale comes sweeping along, howling in its force; but sleep in security, it will not move the monument of the murdered."

"I thought you partook immoderately of the wine, in which perhaps these villanous people have infused some poisonous drugs." Then Vratz added to himself, "What shall I do with a mad master, without a horse? I'll just look, or rather listen, in the other room, to find how far our throats are safe. Curse on the cur that gave a lamp which would not burn; and yet, perhaps, the wind, which is not civil enough to remain outside, may have blown it out."

Vratz crept through the room in which they had supped, and returning, satisfied that

all was still, he ran against the table, upset it, broke the empty bottles, and got back to his hard bed, shaking at the very noise he had occasioned. Not even this disturbed the host and hostess—at least, they never spoke or moved; and Vratz lay down, satisfied that murders were so common in the house that no one took any notice of them. Having recovered his fright, and moved his long rapier round and round him, in order to feel for his foe, and run its sharp point once or twice in the casement, and against a chair, he made himself over to the guardianship of the Virgin, and once more fell asleep, his master evidently having done the same.

The first streak of day disturbed the slumbers of Vratz, and he looked out of the window which he himself had fastened: the morning was dark and lowering, but the wind had somewhat abated. Having crossed himself devoutly, and felt his throat once or twice, he girded on his rapier, threw a huge cloak over his shoulders, and folding it round him, went to inspect the horses. On his return, no one

was stirring: his master was fast asleep, and the host and hostess remained quiet. As the sun rose, the clouds began to clear away, and Vratz, who was by no means anxious to remain longer than was necessary, awoke his master, and stared at the look of astonishment with which Konigsmark seemed to inspect the room. "It's very strange," he said, "and it must have been a dream. I see no sign or token,—all is the same as when I slept."

Vratz felt his pulse, passed his hand over his forehead; the first beat quickly, and the last was hot and feverish; he drew his rapier, and then, taking his garter, began to bind his master's arm.

"What now, idiot?" said Konigsmark, as he looked at him.

"If I let him blood a little," said Vratz, "I may yet restore his senses. Lord protect us! how wild he looks—how he examines everything—he turns his rapier as if he did not know it, and feels his neck and hair as if some one had played him a pleasantry. What now, I wonder!"

"Hah!" ejaculated Konigsmark — "'tis here; by my Maker, it was no dream. Look, Vratz, you believe me mad, and I might have been so but for this. You know all the ornaments I ever wore about my person—you have known from my infancy all I ever possessed—I have had no secret from you. Look at this—has this ring ever been mine until now? See, how it is placed behind my signet; look, man, examine it closely. Did a man of my bearing and rank ever carry a plain iron ring like this? Stay—there are some figures, but they seem worn away with time. Speak, fool, is this mine? Take it from my finger, for it seems to burn me."

In vain Vratz tried, the ring was immovable, and the retainer, believing this was a gift of the devil's, declared he felt an electric shock, and would try it no longer; whilst Konigsmark, no longer anxious to remain, lest he should betray himself, desired Vratz to order the horses. "Here," said he, "take my purse, and pay. I will walk slowly on, and beware you put the money on the table, and touch not their hands, good Vratz—touch

not their hands, for there is blood upon them—
ay, blood upon them!"

"I wonder," said Vratz to himself, "if the
Count is a lunatic or a maniac!"

CHAPTER XII.

"His purse is empty already; all his golden words are spent."—HAMLET.

VRATZ was not long in obeying his master's orders, but he was very fearful of losing sight of him ever since the affair with the witches. The retainer considered the Count somewhat deranged, although his appearance and accomplishments had enabled him, when in Paris, to become distinguished in the highest of the court circles, and he had added much to the reputation of the name of Konigsmark, young as he then was, by his learning and his conversation.

They now journeyed onwards toward Rome, and Konigsmark, who was well recommended,

soon became known in the highest society. Lost in the giddy and intoxicating round of pleasure, and fearful lest ridicule should be attached to him, the Count for some days kept the secret in his own bosom, until he found himself unable to sleep, from the continued irritation produced by the ring, which, often and often, he had tried ineffectually to remove, and which, directly he began to doze, became tightened and uncomfortable. He therefore made up his mind to brave even the shout of ridicule, and satisfy the desire of the ghost. He told the story to the proper authorities, exactly as he saw and heard it himself. He shewed the ring, and produced Vratz as evidence that when he went to bed that night he did not possess it, and he defied any one present to remove it. This done, he retired, and heard the subdued laughter of those to whom he had confided his secret.

But there was one of that number less incredulous than the rest. He, being in authority, despatched some men to examine the house and make certain inquiries. Under the bed was found the body of the man stabbed

as Konigsmark had described. It was proved upon a trial which afterwards took place that the murdered man had not been seen at Turin on the day he was missed; and upon the strongest circumstantial evidence, the small thin anatomy of a man and the once handsome woman were both executed.

As the circumstances of this case brought Konigsmark more before the public than was his desire, he resolved to depart, and made preparations to sail for Malta. Vratz was particularly anxious that both his master and himself should be blessed by the pope, more especially as it was generally affirmed that ghosts only appeared to heretics, and that the souls of all who associated with witches were decidedly damned; the pope alone being able to remove the curse. On the day that his eminence blessed the horses and the asses, Vratz and his master being present, shared in the general absolution, and started forward with lighter hearts and easier minds.

"Although not of that faith exactly," remarked Vratz, "I feel better for the blessing. Every wise man seeks to have a friend in every

place; and we can be none the worse for it."

"And not much the better, Vratz. We are well out of that sink of iniquity, and I breathe more freely myself. The friends of those with whom we supped might have revenged themselves upon us by means of the stiletto, which no one can avoid. Here, at Naples, we are safe for a day or two; to-morrow the boat sails for Messina, and we must trust ourselves to the seamanship of these men, who bask in the sunshine and swallow macaroni, rivalling the lazzaroni, who only awake to eat. Faith, they are but indifferent looking sailors!—but we will trust ourselves to their protection."

When Vratz was safely on board the Santa Maria de Compostella, and the anchor a-weigh, he followed the religious observances of his shipmates, and as they passed a huge crucifix he knelt down and crossed himself, whilst Konigsmark, who knew that in the event of any disaster occurring it would be attributed to the heretics, averted all chances of such a calamity by doing the same, and furthermore

acted the hypocrite by asking Vratz, aloud, if he had confessed before he sailed.

“ And had the blessing of the holy father himself,” replied the retainer. “ The voyage will be prosperous, for I burnt six candles to the Virgin, and I thought I saw her smile upon me.”

“ Whenever we are in a strange country, Vratz, it's just as well to follow the manners and the customs of the people. It is a folly to court danger when it can be shunned. We shall have plenty of opportunities of exhibiting our valour without running into difficulties which, by a few words and signs, may be avoided. So to-night, at vespers, do as the rest do. We can offer up our own prayers on our knees, and the sign of the cross will convince them we are catholics.”

“ I should like very much to know what I am,” said Vratz, “ for I never could clearly convince myself, and have unfortunately been dubbed a heretic by both parties.”

The wind was fresh and fair, and the small vessel, reeling under her huge lateen sail, went briskly through the water. Konigsmark and

his retainer felt all the chilling horrors of seasickness, and the day and night were passed in overcoming the most oppressive of all maladies, which, in spite of the million of nostrums sold to conquer it, has ever maintained its power over almost all who trust themselves upon that inconstant element—the sea.

The next day the Lipari Islands were passed : Stromboli smoked, and the clouds curled beneath its summit. The Pharo of Messina was made during the night, and the dangers of Scylla and Charybdis being avoided, the vessel, in smooth water, made good progress towards her port. Konigsmark remained on deck, for the night was fine; he passed his time in surveying the high land of Calabria, and of arguing with himself on the probability of an earthquake having severed Sicily from the main land; and, being learned in Virgil, he recalled to his mind the many passages on the subject, and refreshed his memory by the quotations.

Time flies quickly when the mind is employed; and those who have stored their memories when young seldom have to resort to vice to be relieved from the heavy oppression of

idleness. He who can bring to his mind the sayings of the ancients, and, as he passes the spots to which they refer, can recal them instantly, is a merry voyager and a good companion, improving others as he refreshes himself: but he who is ignorant of all that has been written by them, is but a blank sheet of paper, ready to take any impression, and generally retains the most striking objects, to the utter exclusion of the most interesting and useful. It appeared scarcely half an hour from the time the vessel entered the straits until she anchored within the rude Mole, which then protected the harbour of Messina.

As Konigsmark intended surveying the ruins of Catania and Agrigentum, and seeing the sun rise from the summit of Mount Etna, he had meditated a stay of some weeks in Sicily; but he was the child of circumstances, and obeyed every impulse of his sanguine mind.

“Here’s fire and fury, war and murder within reach of us,” said Vratz. “Heaven’s blessings are showering upon us fast, and every man of us may cut the throat of an infidel within forty-eight hours of this lucky moment.

The Knights of Malta intend to chase from their island some Turkish vessels which have lately hovered on the coast, and in this harbour a great activity prevails. Many are animated by religious hatred in this affair; and if you could feel the same zeal, Count, it would be well for both of us in a religious point of view; and plunder and riches, which I feel a great desire to practise and to grasp, might assist us in a worldly way."

"When do they put to sea, Vratz? Make diligent inquiries. It is an adventure I court; for I loathe the sluggish life of the traveller. Quick!—get all intelligence!—and the first vessel which hoists her sail to the wind shall bear us to Malta. What shout is that?"

"That is the shout of a man who has made a fortunate hit. Opposite to our hotel is a place of public resort. The usual occupation of the rich and great goes on, and although it is now one of the clock, the gamblers chink their money, and laugh or curse away the night."

"I will be with them on the instant. In the meantime go you to the port. Look well to the condition of each vessel about to sail.

Remark that one which is manned, and which has her sails hanging to her yards, and where the greatest activity prevails. There give notice of my intentions, and tell the Captain that I pay handsomely when well accommodated. Look you, Vratz—let this sailor be assured that I bear letters from the pope. It is a religious frenzy which inspires them; and this innocent falsehood will ensure our passage. You will find me in the opposite house."

The rage of gambling was universal in the year of our Lord, 1677. Men played away their fortunes, and then retrieved them by the sword, or avenged their loss by seeking a quarrel with the more fortunate player, and killing him in the duel. Forests were felled to pay for one night's excitement; and wood was called "an excrescence of the earth provided by God for the payment of debts." Konigsmark delighted in this excitement, for in Paris he had recruited his almost exhausted finances, and some slight assistance, in order to maintain his rank, became now somewhat necessary. Failing in this, he intended to

enter fully into Vratz's views, and try the effects of plunder and rapine.

In a room not magnificently furnished, and standing round a large table, were about forty men, all busy in the hope of increasing their wealth. Some, whose haggard eyes and clenched hands betrayed how heavy were their losses, looked idly on: they had been ruined, but still clung to the spot, fascinated even in destruction. Others laughed loudly, and made the merry jest; whilst some, with sanguine expectation, threw the dice violently, cursing and smiling as Fortune was cruel or auspicious. Dice have been found in the ruins of Pompeii. They have contributed to suicide and plunder for years and years; and were invented by the devil to mar the happiness of man.

Even those most employed in this ruinous speculation could not refrain from remarking Konigsmark. His dress and manner bespoke him a stranger, and the courteous Sicilians immediately invited him to approach. He bowed gracefully in acknowledgment of the compliment, and with the careless air of one accustomed to play, and with a countenance

well schooled not to betray an emotion, he drew from his pocket a handful of Louis-d'ors, and carelessly placed them on the table. They were swept away, and were soon replaced by others. The most inveterate gamblers watched the movements of Konigsmark. He lost continually: not once did Fortune favour him; and at last even *he* bit his lip, and murmured out an oath. As he continued losing, each player, with the superstition of a gambler, avoided the side on which he played, seeing that the stream ran strong against him, and that nothing but immense riches could stem the tide of misfortune. At last, not one coin remained. In vain he felt in the huge pockets from which he had so carelessly drawn forth his money. There was none. The sword he wore was of value; it had been bought in Paris, when he first purposed his visit to Lady Elizabeth Percy. It was much more for shew than for service. With the reckless spirit of a gamester, he offered it. At first, it was objected to; but a gentleman who had much admired the Count's personal appearance, and who wondered much that one so young could

so well control his temper under such circumstances, proposed to buy the weapon at a handsome price. It was agreed to, and the money staked, with which he won.

Fortune now began to exhibit her inconstancy to her victim : sometimes he won, sometimes he lost, but he never *gained*; until, at last, wearied of the frivolous fluctuations, she again became adverse, and Konigsmark offered his rings for sale. The iron ring attracted more notice than the gold one; but, as he could not remove it from his finger, he staked hand, coat, and all, at a fair equivalent, and was successful. From that moment he began a steady run of good fortune; and if, when the tide was adverse he had played cautiously, he now courted the favouring breeze, and played most desperate stakes. He recovered his sword for nearly double the price he had sold it; and he now found himself rolling in gold.

At the time of his master's greatest prosperity, Vratz entered the room, and taking him aside, announced that in a quarter of an hour one of the vessels would sail; that

the luggage was embarked, the sails hoisted, and men placed by the hawsers to free the galley.

"I must wait, Vratz. Fortune has favoured me mightily, and these impoverished Sicilians expect a continuance of play."

"Then disappoint them, Count, and, making your bow to fortune, walk off with what you have gained. Besides, your luggage; you cannot stay and let that depart."

"Right, Vratz. Take this handful of gold and play once. If you win, keep the profits for your services. If you lose, the loss shall be mine."

"By the Pope, who blessed me, I should like to play on those terms for a fortnight! Here's a prayer for Fortune's aid, and there's the money."

Vratz won, and like a prudent man was contented with the stake. He bowed to the surrounding gamesters, and said, with much gravity, "I hope, good signors, that on our return you will be equally inclined to pay for our establishments, and when I next quaff a glass, I will remember you in my toast."

These foolish words led to a serious affray. Those who had lost spoke indignantly at the uncourteous insult; and Vratz, ever ready to rush into a quarrel, placed his hand on his rapier. Some favoured the side of Konigsmark, as he was a stranger. The tables were upset, and the lights extinguished, and, in the confusion which followed, Konigsmark seized his retainer by the hand and forced him from the room, leaving the Sicilians to find out that the man who was laden with money, and the attendant who had insulted them, had escaped, by this speech of Vratz's, the assassination in the street, which some desperate players had meditated, and the robbery they had attempted to commit upon them.

"Now, Count," said Vratz, "our discretion is best shewn in the valour we exhibit in running away, and leaving those idiots to abuse us as cowards. Yonder is the vessel—I hear the seamen shouting. We must use our feet to the best advantage."

As Konigsmark stepped on the deck, the hawser was cast off, the vessel felt the influence of the sails; and as she cleared the



Mole Head, voices still familiar to the ears of the adventurers were heard, and curses loud and deep were shouted against the cowards who first drew their swords, and then feared to fight the battle.

Vratz called aloud to them to go to bed, and to recollect that, in many cases, the coolness which suggested the retreat was a greater proof of courage than staying in the streets to be stilettoed, and that on his return he would fight the whole forty.

The seamen gave a loud shout of laughter, and encouraged Vratz to continue his insolence; and whilst even the captain joined in the mirth, Konigsmark retired to the cabin, and secured the gold he had won, keeping about him but very little more than was requisite to pay his passage.

The small vessel made good way; the snowy top of Mount Etna became visible, and at daylight the travellers in search of adventures were off Cape Passaro. By the evening of the following day, the vessel was close to the entrance of Valetta harbour, having narrowly

escaped being captured by a Turkish vessel, which very nearly cut the Sicilian off; for the latter, being indifferently manned and armed, must have fallen an easy prey to those marauders, who then infested the seas.

CHAPTER XIII.

"An honourable murderer, if you will ;
For nought I did in hate—but all in honour."

OTHELLO.

THE harbour of Valetta bustled with animation; the bells of St. John's continued their never ceasing tinkling; every church vied in producing that noise; shouts from the mariners, as they continued their work, resounded through the port; boats with the retainers and soldiers of the Knights of Malta passed to and fro, and the whole presented a scene of great exertion to equip the different galleys and row boats, in order to make a grand attack upon the Turkish flotilla, which occa-

sionally stood near to the entrance of the harbour, and cut off the communication between Sicily and Malta. Never did those gallant knights exert themselves more than in this religious warfare; the crescent waved within sight of them; and those who wore the cross of St. John saw with shame and confusion that they were blockaded in their own port, and unable to assist the friends who ventured from Sicily to increase their force. The boat which conveyed Konigsmark was the only one which made good her passage for fourteen days.

Konigsmark and Vratz—who was now no longer permitted to wear the badge of servitude, but was equipped from his master's wardrobe — instantly volunteered their services, which were as readily accepted. They spurned with indignation the proposition of emolument from the knights; and Konigsmark observed that if he increased his riches, it would be by making his enemies pay for his services—that the cause of religion animated him, and that the blessings of the Church were a sufficient recompense.

Vratz re-echoed these sentiments in public,

but ventured to suggest in private to the Count, that the Church was very liberal of its blessings, and that food and raiment were much more comfortable things in this world. "It's well," he continued, "to have an easy conscience ; but a full stomach and a well covered body are great requisites to the quiet and ease of the mind. I have no objection to fighting ; but I should like to understand if plunder is allowed, and if every one is to keep what he has courage to seize?"

"If you were to die in this service, Vratz, your soul would be saved."

"And if I survived it, my body might be starved. I have not the least objection to fight for religion, providing those who benefit by the victory pay the soldiers. I am just heretic enough to think that the Sicilian coin is more beneficial than the Pope's blessing ; and as all Turks are fair game, I'll venture to borrow all I can from them, if we succeed."

This was an adventure quite in accordance with the untamed spirit of Konigsmark. Excitement was requisite to him ; and bold, daring, and reckless, he rejoiced at this opportunity

of rushing headlong into the affray, caring very little for the results. Vratz, on the contrary, was cold and cautious, excessively attached to the Count, and ready to follow him through any desperate struggle, provided always he was remunerated for his services. One fought for the love of adventure, the other for the hope of reward.

In the course of the week, not fewer than twenty small vessels were equipped and manned, and it was judged advisable by the knights to risk an engagement, in order to relieve the island from the blockade, and thus not only afford the Sicilians an opportunity of supplying reinforcements in arms and vessels, but likewise to enable them to pour in provisions. During the night a vessel was dispatched to Syracuse, and information was given that, on the Monday following, the fleet would leave Malta harbour, and a general action would take place. Great activity prevailed at Syracuse and Messina, and ten vessels were already armed and in readiness for sea. The Turkish fleet amounted to thirty-five vessels. Some were large galleys, crowded

with men ; others row boats ; whilst one or two respectable sized ships looked like the parents of the strange brood.

Sunday was a day of fasting and prayer. The crews of the different vessels received absolution, and were blessed. Religious fanaticism stifled every feeling of humanity. The followers of Mahomet were cursed as dogs, and reviled as beasts ; and if those of the Crescent who fell in battle were promised a heaven suited to their wishes, and if they were told the Houris were waving their handkerchiefs to welcome the warriors who fell in the combat, the Knights of St. John declared, on the other hand, that the Mahommedans were one and all accursed heretics, to be slaughtered in this world and damned in the next, whilst those of the Cross who fought bravely in the right faith should meet with everlasting happiness. In this way each party animated its own soldiers, and each in all probability conscientiously believed in the rewards it promised, and in the utter debasement and ignorance of its opponent.

Konigsmark's enthusiasm rose in proportion to the religious fervour of those who excited

the Maltese, whilst Vratz, much more philosophical than his master, was heard to mutter, "It's all fair enough. Those turban-covered marauders are in all probability abusing us just as loudly and just as fervently."

On Monday morning a bright look-out was kept in the direction of Sicily; it was so clear that Mount Etna was plainly visible. To the eastward of the harbour the Turkish squadron lay nearly becalmed; their red flags and pennants hardly indicated the slightest breeze, and the vessels were in some disorder as to position. Everything in the harbour of Valletta denoted desperate resolves. The women crowded the shore, and waved their hands, and many knelt down and prayed aloud for success. Everything was ready, and they awaited only the signal from the Grand Master to put to sea. Towards noon a light breeze sprang up, and the enemy stood towards the harbour, whilst from the watch tower ten vessels were seen under sail, coming from Sicily.

No sooner did the Turks perceive these, than they altered their course, and stood in pursuit; and at that instant a flag was shewn from the

summit of St. John's church. One loud shout proclaimed the signal; every galley spread its sail, and the narrow entrance of the harbour seemed crowded, as each vessel endeavoured to pass its companion and be first in the affray. On clearing the harbour, the vessels took up their respective stations, and a chase ensued. There was no one who lent a stronger or a more willing hand than Konigsmark; and even Vratz, who was by no means animated by any religious fervour, and who merely fought for plunder, occasionally assisted the rower, and rebuked him for "not being in a greater hurry to get killed."

No sooner did the Turks perceive the coming foe, than they used every exertion to overtake the Sicilian squadron, in hopes of destroying their enemies in detail. But the latter at once comprehending the manœuvre, edged away more towards Goza, which, from the situation of the Maltese squadron, placed the Turks in such an angle as to be neared by those who pursued them, whilst, in the event of any misfortune, it gave the Sicilians a

chance of running their boats on shore, and at any rate escaping capture.

It was an animated sight. Each party was confident of success; the turbaned host viewed with contempt the exertions of the Christian, and the latter, who respected the Turks as enemies, despised them as men. Never did the sword of religious fanaticism wave brighter than on that day, and both parties solicited in prayers the aid and protection of their God. The Turks, finding that they were being led too close to the shore, turned round boldly to face the Maltese; and the Sicilians, animated more by the hope of plunder than religion, instantly pursued the Turks.

“Now for it, Vratz!” said Konigsmark. “In this motley group of half-Arab half-Italian bastard breed, it’s hard to select a man in whom a stranger can repose any trust; do you, therefore, be close to me, and you will not be the last on board. Now, Captain, that large vessel is the most difficult to capture—let us have the honour of attacking her.”

“We can make sure of that smaller vessel,”

said the Captain, who, although very clamorous in his appeal to Heaven, seemed somewhat to have lost his confidence.

“ If every one attacked the smaller vessel,” said Konigsmark, with disgust, “ the best part of the prey would escape. ‘ An eagle does not stoop at flies.’ No, no—alongside the largest vessel, and I’ll try the temper of my Swedish steel against the bright scymitar of Damascus. They fire without an aim already, and the smoke is our best ally.”

Animated by the manner of Konigsmark and the coolness of Vratz, the crew determined to try their success at the larger vessel, the Captain, hailing one of the other vessels, mentioning his intention, and calling upon him for support, with loud shouts the galley was propelled alongside. Instantly a general rush was made to board, and the Turks as resolutely resisted the attempt. Konigsmark, in spite of guns and pikes and swords, made good a landing on the deck, and Vratz followed him closely. They were assailed by numbers, and boldly and resolutely they faced their foes,

thus giving time for others to ascend the side and form a front.

"Now, for our God and victory!" shouted Konigsmark. "Forward—forward, men!"

"Allah, il Allah!" shouted the Turks, and rushed upon their foes.

It was a hand-to-hand fight, and each inch of the deck was nobly defended. The Turks, who had seen the insignificant numbers which had boarded, made a desperate rush, and forced the Maltese back to the taffrail. Animated by this success, they shouted louder and louder to their prophet, and attempted to follow up their advantage, and rid themselves of all their troublesome intruders. At this moment the boat which had been hailed boarded on the starboard bow, and the Turks, finding an enemy in their rear, became somewhat alarmed, and hesitated in their attack.

"Forward—forward!" shouted Konigsmark, and dashed in amongst them. "Follow me; a Konigsmark—a Konigsmark!"

The word acted with talismanic effect, and the seamen rushed to the fight. Konigsmark

forced his way through the Turks, and in the desperate attempt to open a line for the rest to follow, his sword broke in his hand. He instantly rushed upon a Turk and grappled him ; whilst another, seeing the giant disarmed, ran a pike through his leg, and nearly pinned him to the deck. The Turk grappled his foe with all the courage and the resolution of a predestinarian, strong, young, brave, and injured to fatigue. The Mahomedan held the short, stout Swede at bay, and relieved himself of the first grip which was at his throat. His sword, which had been sharpened for the affray, and with which he could divide a silk handkerchief as it floated in the air, fortunately fell from his hand, and Konigsmark, disabled by the wound, made a last effort to cling to his stronger adversary. So hotly were the others engaged, and now so equal were the numbers, that these two struggled alone.

Vratz had seen the captain of his galley killed, and instantly replaced him, standing over his body, and fighting like an enraged devil ; and Konigsmark, whose undaunted soul could never yield, brought all his energies against the firm

Turk, who grappled with him in all the consciousness of overpowering strength. In vain, however, he attempted to rid himself of the wounded Swede; nothing could shake him free of the resolute grasp; and thus struggling and struggling, each unarmed, and each practising every art to throw his adversary, they were carried unintentionally to the open gangway. Konigsmark's strength, but not his spirit, now began to fail, and the Turk found the strong grip somewhat relaxed. Availing himself of his superior power, he dragged the Swede forward, and attempted to throw him overboard. With one hand he struck him a tremendous blow on the head, and twisted him over with the other. Konigsmark fell, but in the fall contrived to trip up his adversary, and both went overboard. In the sudden shock they separated; and Konigsmark being an excellent swimmer, came up from his immersion free from his opponent, who, being unpractised in that art, stretched out his brawny arms to grasp his fortunate adversary. Konigsmark was clear of his reach, and the unconquered Turk sunk into the deep, his last look

directed at his enemy, and his last endeavour at reaching him, in order to drag him downwards with him. Konigsmark swam to the rudder, and soon was on the deck. The sword which had fallen from his late adversary now became his arms; and at the very moment when the Turks again had rallied, and were beating back their enemies, he rushed into the midst, shouting aloud, "A Konigsmark—a Konigsmark!" he turned the tide of victory; and, leading on the almost dispirited Maltese, drove the Turks to the fore part of the vessel, and slaughtered them with unsparing hand. Vratz was not idle in this affair. Naturally cruel, and with a disposition to revenge, he did not balk himself of his pleasure. Blood once shed, when religion is the war cry, is not easily stanchèd. They were but Turks—unbelieving Mussulmen—heretics without the pale of mercy; and Christianity, forgetting the mildness of its tenets, and its injunctions to forgive, cut down the unarmed, defenceless, and exhausted Mahomedan, exulting in the murder, and rejoicing in the deed.

"Bind up my leg, good Vratz, with that

dying Turk's turban, and we will soon be ready to assist our friends. This wound is cruelly painful now I have time to feel; but in the struggle and the swim I never heeded it. The salt water makes it smart intensely."

"Now, good Count, every man for himself, and God for us all. We have done our duty, and we will reap the reward. First on board, first to the plunder."

"Don't talk of plunder, whilst yet a red pennant is flying. I would not lose one moment of the fight for all the jewels of the Sultan's diadem. A Konigsmark—a Konigsmark!" he shouted, as he rushed forward; and as the vessel touched another one of the Turkish squadron, he leapt from the bow, and led on the men to a fresh conquest.

"Every man according to his own disposition," said Vratz, having cut a few throats, and prepared a few Turks for the place his eminence at Rome declared ready for them. "I'll now take care of my worldly interest, my eternal welfare being considerably increased from this day's holy work and pious occupation. I have got large pockets, and Turkish

sequins are nice, handy, and very excellent coin." Having finished his soliloquy, and seeing the vessel left entirely to his command, he jumped below, and began the work for which he had so long yearned, and for which he was so admirably qualified.

Here he found more even than his cupidity had anticipated. Money was not so abundant as metal less easily concealed. Silver-headed scymitars, pistols magnificently mounted, and some jewels, were admired and purloined. But in the midst of his quiet enrichment, he was startled at a sound which appeared to come from beneath the deck. It came like a low hollow groan, and Vratz thought he heard words which were familiar to his ear.

"This is rather awkward," said Vratz, to himself; "and is worse, if possible, than being disturbed at dinner. I thought I had got all these good things to myself. By the Virgin! here are gold fillagree saucers, with which these unbelieving scoundrels saved their fingers from the hot coffee-cups. A groan and a sigh!—an Ave Maria, and a sob! It must be a woman, one of the Turk's seraglio, embarked

to be drowned at discretion." Here Vratz, who was nearly bent double with the weight of his plunder, after groping about, discovered a hatch, which he lifted up, and he beheld, rising from her reclining posture, a beautiful young woman. He gave her his hand, and raised her to the cabin deck; he then placed her on an ottoman, and having retired a few steps, began to think that she was his, in right of conquest, and was a recapture from the Turk.

There is a certain expression of the eye which a woman never mistakes, and the beautiful captive saw at a glance all the devil of Vratz's heart. She forestalled the few words which he meditated, and began—"Surely a Christian will respect what even a Turk has left uninjured. I hailed you as my deliverer—let me not curse you as my murderer! I am a miserable captive whom you have liberated. Oh, make me not to hate the hour of my freedom!"

"Have you ever been blessed by the Pope, and had your sins forgiven by a confessor?" said Vratz. "Do you know the rights of war, and the privileges granted to the con-

queror when a town is given up to plunder? Do you think I fight to give up all I gain? By the Virgin! those charms might well entice a Turk to place them in security; but they are mine by right, and I will avail myself of all the privileges of war. Cease your useless tears, for Vratz's heart never was softened by anything but gold, and that I have got, more than I can well carry."

"Spare me—spare me! and I'll bless you, and pray for you."

"The Pope's blessed me, fool! and the priest has prayed for me. Come, let me taste the beauties of those lips, and learn to yield, when tears are useless and prayers unavailing."

"Unhand me, rash man!" said the captive, as she vainly struggled in the powerful grasp of the ruffian—"or I'll plunge this dagger in your heart!"

"Have you ever seen the sparrow fight the hawk, and escape?" said Vratz, as he twisted the dagger, which the captive had snatched from his belt, from her hand. "Can the lamb resist the eagle, or the fly the spider

when in its web? Shriek and scream—it is a woman's privilege; but, for the attempt on your deliverer's life, a crown should not save you from my embrace."

"For one moment, forbear!" said the girl. "I feel I am overpowered, and resistance useless. I will save all I hold dear by one last effort. I know where the gold of the Turks is concealed; spare me until to-morrow, and I will laden myself with it for your use. Those useless arms are by comparison worthless; throw them away; fill your pockets with other plunder, and I will carry all this weak frame can bear, and be your slave. Proceed as you wished, and no power on earth shall make me betray the place of the treasure, and the next comer shall be enriched; besides this, my prayers——"

"Oh, never mind your prayers and pious offerings! On the agreement that you are mine—that your honour is pledged to *that*—that you show the treasure, and laden yourself for *me*, I release you from my grasp, and you have done more than any other woman ever did with Vratz."

The cupidity of the Swede was satisfied; he threw away the silver-mounted arms, and filled his pockets with more useful gold. This done, he took his companion on deck at the moment others came to commence their plunder. One, who preferred woman to wealth, rushed at the girl, but Vratz swept his long rapier to protect her, and risked his life to save her virtue;—this, at least, was believed by the generous girl, who little knew the inward workings of his heart. He fought for her, because she was laden with all he worshipped—gold; and he meditated selling her to Konigsmark for more.

The ruffian who now fought him for the girl, was preparing for a grand attack. Vratz held her by the left arm, whilst, with his right, he stood at guard, ready to resist. He was saved the risk, and gained an equal reputation. Konigsmark had returned to the vessel, and seeing the disposition of the Maltese soldier, he seized him by the neck, and swinging him rudely on the deck, placed his foot upon his breast, and threatened to thrust his sword into his lascivious heart.

The day was won; the Turks, slaughtered or

drowned, had met a harder fate than they would have bestowed, as life would have been saved to have been worked out in slavery. A gentle breeze swelled the sails, and before sunset the captured vessels rode at anchor in Valetta harbour. The bells rang their unceasing notes—loud shouts welcomed the victors—and Konigsmark, accompanied by Vratz, who kept firm hold of his captive, landed, and gained the hostel. Here the plunder was exhibited, and the captive Isabella released of her promise; for Konigsmark vowed his loudest vengeance against his retainer, if he dared to shew treachery to the girl he had rescued; nay, more, he seized the plunder as his right, for Vratz was his servant. This was restored. The Grand Master himself claimed the honour of bestowing thanks upon Konigsmark; his name became a password of bravery on the island; and Vratz, sharing in his master's tide of glory, was made a captain, released from his servitude, enriched by the plunder, and admired by the girl he had saved, for his bravery in defending her from others.

CHAPTER XIV.

"AT any rate, Count," said Vratz, "I hope this black-eyed Isabella is not the star of your destiny. I won her fairly, but at your desire I liberate her. Now, what is to be done with her? for I do not like to part with her, and I would not wed Diana herself to have her dangle after me, and call herself my wife—half of me—a legal participator in all spoils. Who invented marriage?"

"One of whom you know little—Cecrops; and Pope Innocent III. made it a holy ceremony amongst Christians. Before that time (the eleventh century) men took wives as they

did their garments, wearing them, and putting them away, as either caprice or necessity suggested."

"And the man who altered this pleasant fashion they call Innocent! By my faith! he was guilty of the greatest folly and injustice—making both parties slaves, and calling it a happy union."

"How would the grateful Isabella suit you for a partner? She loves you, because you offered your life to save her honour, which you would have stolen yourself. We cannot understand the sex; but you are a stout man—not ill-favoured—bold and daring. Women ever love such!"

"Then I'll not marry her, for she must love *you*. Women love men who are warriors; and how should I feel when every rascally fellow who wears the cross upon his arm, betokening him a soldier, shouted out 'a Konigsmark,' as the crusaders did 'a Godfrey,' or 'a Richard?' I would not wed her, to have you preferred to myself—for all the women love you!"

"We need not pay each other compliments. Let us entice the fair maiden here, and by

artful means draw forth her history. There is a graceful manner in her walk, that bespeaks her of gentle blood, and she must be cared for and respected. Fair lady," said Konigsmark, as he tapped at her door, "the brave man who released you demands the grace of your company."

Isabella instantly appeared. She was, indeed, of graceful symmetry; her hair was dark as night, but her eye made compensation, and brightened all around her; never did whiter teeth peep from between more rosy lips. A sad smile rested on her cheeks, like a tint of sun-ray on the heavy and over-burthened cloud bursting with a thunder-storm. She advanced to Vratz, and would have spoken, but she burst into tears, which choked her utterance.

"This makes my heart jump like a tennis-ball," said Vratz. "I feel as sick as when first I crossed the Baltic, and my lips tremble like a frightened child's. Drink of this wine, fair lady; it was your companion; for although Mahomedans abjure it openly, they are strongly addicted to it in secresy. Fear nothing from us, but too much attention and respectful love.

Your release from captivity has released me from servitude, and although henceforward I will accompany the Count through all his scenes of active life, and all his daring deeds of adventure; although for him I will peril my life in flood or field, in weal or woe; yet am I freed from him as a retainer; and your liberty, which I grant most freely, is the heavy sum I have to pay to gain my own emancipation."

"And if a grateful heart—all a poor maiden can offer, excepting her prayers," said Isabella, as she chased away the quick-falling tears, "can, with your freedom that the generous Count has given, make amends for the loss of so poor a slave as myself, God is my witness you shall have the full measure of all that is mine to offer and to give—my gratitude, my ceaseless prayers."

"But I would have more than you offer, fair lady," said Konigsmark. "Nay, blush not. What I ask, a maiden may unblushingly give—your history. How came you in that vessel?"

"Mine is the life which proves truth

stranger than fiction. Those who have saved me have a just claim upon me for that which, from the hour of my birth until this moment, has been disastrous, and has brought ruin upon all who sheltered and protected me. May yours, noble sirs, be a better fate! If I shall not weary your ears by the repetition of that which is sorrowful and sad, I will at once gratify your desires."

"Speak, black-eyed angel!" said Vratz. "By my freedom, her words penetrate my very heart, and my eyes are fixed upon her as if she charmed me. Pray God she be not a witch; for it is written 'a witch shall surely die,' and she has already bewitched me. I listen."

"Of my very early life I know nothing. I have been often told that I was born in Calabria; nor will I disguise from you that I fear my father gained a dishonest livelihood, by deeds not countenanced by the laws. His name was Antonio Marvelli, and I have since my earliest recollection borne the name of Isabella Marvelli, and I bear upon my left arm the letter M. I have a very faint recollection of one scene of my early childhood. A great

booty having been captured, the party, of whom my father was the leader, quarrelled about the distribution of the plunder, when one of the men pointed to me, and said, 'Why not return that black-eyed child to her parents? The ransom offered is fair a one, but you and your wife seek to detain her for your own purposes, whilst we, the honest participators, may be shot as thieves, or kept from the spoil.'

"As it appears I listened with much attention, my mother caught me up and put me into an adjoining room. By-and-by the quarrel grew hotter, and I heard the clash of swords and the shrieks of men. I can well recollect the violent words which were used, and the noise which followed. I was so frightened that I cried, and I fell asleep exhausted.

"Early the next morning, we left our hut, which stood in the deep recesses of a thick wood, and which sometimes now appears before me. My mother complained of the heavy burden she carried, whilst my father, whose right arm was bound in a sling, comforted her, and relieved her occasionally of one bundle, about which they seemed very solicitous. We passed

through brake and briar; the mountain path was narrow and slippery, and harsh words were used to make me walk faster. As well as I was able I ran, and three or four times I fell. Once, when my father cursed me for detaining them, my mother said, 'If we could dispose of her now, it would be better for us.' My father rebuked her, saying, 'Zitto! Zitto! the child will live to remember this, for she is quick in all but walking. How could we dispose of her now? The castle is far off, the Count is at Rome, and our time is short. By noon we shall be pursued; and if the boat is on the Sicilian side of the strait, we must make free with the first we can find.'

I soon became wearied and fatigued, and being unable to continue, I sat down and cried. I remember the stripe of my father, and the deep curses of my mother—each was unavailing. My father at last passed round my waist, the leathern strap with which he had struck me and swinging me like a load over his shoulder, proceeded at a more rapid pace to the shore. We arrived at the beach about nine o'clock; how far we had come I cannot tell, nor could I ever retrace

the steps. Young as I was, that night and that morning have never passed from my remembrance; neither have the words which have since led me to believe I was not born of *such* parents, been blotted from my memory."

"Look at her delicate, tapered fingers, Count," said Vratz; "those are not of low birth; those eyes are more of the eagle than of the low, thieving blackbird; and all her look is noble. By the Virgin and the Grand Master, I think she was born a princess, and will be one again."

Isabella smiled; nor could she withdraw her bright eyes from the glance of Vratz; there was a deep interest in them evidently sincere; for the glance which would deceive, wants the depth which only true affection gives.

"The boat," she continued, "was fastened to a tree on the shore, and was afloat. In a moment my mother embarked, and I was laid down, and told to sleep. Both seemed to understand the sailor's art, for in an incredibly short time a large sail was spread, and we made good our course, always keeping close to the coast of Calabria, through the pharo of Messina.

I soon fell fast asleep, and when I awoke the boat was far away from the land; the breeze was fresh, and my mother was steering. My father was fast asleep; he had taken off the jacket he had worn, and I saw the marks of blood upon his linen. It is said children never forget the first sight of blood: I never have forgotten that. On my awaking, my mother with her spare hand caressed me; she passed her fingers through my hair, and in a deep and melancholy tone she said—‘Poor little child, born to happier hours than these—what now will become of you? Many mourn for you, but *I* love you. Are you hungry, Bella?’ I answered that I was, and she took a small basket, from which she gave me some bread and eggs; there was a bottle of milk, of which I also drank; and as I ate she continued her melancholy strain: ‘Where shall we go to now? and how will that tender frame bear up against want and misery?’ Here she sang a song which I had often heard my companions sing, and at the conclusion she said, ‘You shall never want a mother. The wind and the snow may strike cold upon me, but I will shield you from the

storm, my poor, unlucky child.' I jumped up and kissed her. My father instantly awoke, and looking at the sun, observed that the breeze kept steady, and that we should soon gain the island. 'We have made good way,' he remarked, 'for Etna is hardly visible.' I strained my eyes to see the snowy mountain, which from that day to this was never seen by me again.

"My father now began to arrange his various bundles. I soon found that my mother had not complained without a cause, for there was much gold in the boat. When it was all arranged, my father took from round his waist a kind of band; it was doubled, and had as many holes as the cells in a beehive; in each of these cells he placed money. When he had filled all, he took the helm, and then my mother filled in the same manner a belt that she also had. There was another still left; it was large; but as there was still money left, my mother was told to alter it for me, so that I might be laden also. I was measured, and my mother set to work, and as much as I could conveniently carry was

laced round me. This being done, some provisions were produced, and we all ate again. It was during this time that I pointed my finger, and said 'What is that?'

" 'It is a vessel,' said my father; 'we are pursued; and if overtaken, the rest, my dear, may be guessed. They will not leave us the chance of revenge, or listen to their old chief. We must steer steadily, and trust to the breeze; if we can escape until the night, it will not be difficult for us to evade pursuit.'

" Again and again my mother pressed me to her, and took the load of gold from my back, and placed it in the boat. On my father asking why she did it, she evaded the question by saying that she had often heard her husband say that the weight in a boat, to render her of quicker speed, should always be at the bottom, and never a shifting kind of ballast.

" 'Right, right, my love,' said my father; 'we can always put on the belts when we are nearly overtaken, so we will place ours near the centre of the boat also.'

" My father's eyes seemed starting from his

head, as he endeavoured to ascertain if the vessel astern was a boat or a ship, or if it neared us or not ; but it only appeared like a small speck on the horizon ; and it must have been an eye of microscopic power to have satisfied his curious research.

“ ‘ Keep her steady, my love ; don’t yaw her about ; there is a small cloud on the larboard bow which does not move, that will be sufficient to steer by, and this small compass, which I never stir without, (but which would be useless to steer by,) will show us our right direction. And if the wind changes, unarmed,’ he continued, musing to himself, ‘incapable of resistance, our fate is easily conjectured, if we are overtaken. And that poor little girl ! Well, I will do her justice at the last.’

“ I had nothing to amuse myself with ; the endless sea to me had the same unaltered and unalterable appearance ; then I little knew of its tremendous power, and how the angry waves could dash the largest ship to atoms, and sprinkle a shore with its wreck, as easily as if it were the sand or the shingle which rolls along the beach. That day was long

indeed, and I blessed the night which added another curtain to my eyes. At sunset, both my parents became very agitated, the speck on the water had grown into a boat; the long lateen sail could be easily distinguished; she was following exactly in our track, and there could be no doubt but that we were the object of which she was in search. Strange as those people's lives were, they still retained some religion, and I can at this distance of time call to mind the very sensation produced by the beautiful harmony of their voices, as they chanted the hymn to the Virgin. I had been taught that also, and I joined in it as I knelt down, and clasped in my tiny hands the crucifix I now wear.

"But enough of this; perhaps I weary you by the minute recital?"

"Go on, lovely Isabella," said Konigsmark.

"Keep speaking," said the enraptured Vratz. "By the blessed Virgin, your voice is always musical!"

"The night came on, and the wind freshened when the sun went down. About half-an-

hour after the darkness had come on, I was sensible, although half-asleep, that some alteration had taken place, for the boat leant more on one side, and the motion was more steady. As I turned about in my cramped position, I heard the low, quick conversation of my parents, and I was always the subject of it. They loved me, although I heard enough to confirm me since that I am of high birth, and not born of brigands of Calabria.

“It was a night of deep interest to them; but to me it became indifferent. A large cloak was put over me, and as children always sleep, I slept soundly, without a dream, dead to the world, unconscious of all around me. I awoke shortly after day-light; both my companions were fast asleep, as quiet as if in a cradle on shore; the sail was down, the mast unstepped, and nothing visible.

“‘Santa Maria di Compostella,’ said my father—for I still must call him so—‘our bloodhounds for once have lost their scent; we must not lay idle here; we must step the mast and hoist the sail.’ Before this was done, I was made to look out on all sides. Nothing was in

sight, and our little boat again splashed through the water. The day passed and came, and passed and came again; but with the sixth day a gale came on. We had enough of provisions until now, and though they were, as far as I was concerned, not required. I was sick—very sick, and lay at the bottom of the boat rolling about, whilst each sea, as it increased in power, struck against the bow and flew over the little vessel. Near us, and to leeward, was the land; it was the high mountains which mark Santa Maura, and every exertion was made to clear a point over which the sea broke, covering it with a white cloud. I wondered at the great precaution to avoid the land, which it had been their constant hope to reach; there was some great danger I did not comprehend; and whilst my face was beaming with joy at the near prospect of landing, and whilst with infantine delight I clapped my hands and pointed to the welcome island, their faces were white with fear, and they were trembling.

“I have no more to tell you of that voyage. Sea after sea rose higher and higher, the sail was split, and my next knowledge of exist-

ence was of excessive pain, and of finding myself in a bed, watched by women who spoke a language I only faintly comprehended, whose dress was different from ours, and who, to all my thousand questions relative to my parents, could not give me an answer, or would not tell me of their fate. The boat had been wrecked, the wealth had been lost, and I had been picked up on the shore to be restored to life, and learn the horrors of dependence and poverty."

CHAPTER XV.

“It was not long,” continued Isabella, “before the friends who had rescued me learnt from my conversation that there was some gold lost in the boat, and diligent search was made for it. Only the belt destined for me was found; for when, in our most perilous moment, we neared the point, both my parents lashed their belts round their bodies; and this love of gold obtained originally by fraud or violence, for which they left their companions and their country, became the means of their death; for when the boiling surf broke into the boat and filled it, their attempt to swim was frus-

trated by the weight they carried, and both perished. The bodies were found on the shore without a vestige of covering, thereby proving that the ill-gotten gold was destined to pass into other hands, not scrupulous of the means of obtaining it.

“As I grew up, people said I grew beautiful. I was relieved from the drudgery of the vilest service, and was cautiously kept from the public gaze. At night I was permitted to walk with the wife of my master, but I was closely veiled, and only allowed to withdraw it when it was certain no one was near to see me. I frequently asked the reason of this caution, but received no answer but a sharp rebuke. I was reminded of all I owed to those who now sought to enrich themselves by the being they had rescued from death. I often heard the words “sultan” and “seraglio;” but quite uninformed of the manners and customs of the Padisshah, the conversation gave me little concern. At last, poverty began to make serious inroads into our cottage. The Albanians had frequently made incursions, and taxed and pillaged the people, whilst the

Turkish governor strenuously exacted all that was requisite to maintain his splendour. Greeks—and my preservers were Greeks—were subject to every oppression in order to raise money for their masters. Mine was now so poor that he could not contribute a farthing. For this he was bastinadoed and cruelly beaten; but he bore it nobly, and I honoured the thief for his disregard of pain. At last, the collectors grew tired of beating him, for they were satisfied he had no money. And now it came to light that his possession of foreign coins, which he had obtained from my belt, had suggested the idea that he was engaged in some clandestine trade, by which these Italian coins came into his possession. It was remembered how often he had produced them, and a search was determined upon.

“He was sitting at his door one evening, enjoying the cool breeze, but too poor even to taste of the tobacco which in days gone by he had smoked through the long cherry-stick, when he saw the collector, followed by two janizaries, coming towards his house. He called his wife, and bade her conceal me as usual.

“ ‘Dog of a Greek! unbelieving hound!’ said the collector, ‘it is rumoured you have money. Give it here, or look at the ferashes.’

“ ‘You have beaten me often,’ replied the submissive Greek. ‘You know, to save myself such pain, I would have paid every farthing.’

“ ‘As if a Greek could suffer any pain equal to his loss of money, or a Jew of Negropont regret his skin if it saved his purse! Go, search his house. Are you not all low, cunning, deceitful liars and thieves, living by contraband trade, spurning at the Prophet, and disbelievers of his law? If you had any gratitude, you should pray for the life of our governor, who allows you to live under the shadow of his protection.’

“I heard every word: for I was shut up in a kind of box, formed by the roof of the cottage, and which before had defied the vigilance of many a Turkish eye. For my own sake, I kept quiet; for badly treated as I was, I thought anything preferable to falling into the hands of unbelieving Turks and infidels; although I confess it appeared strange to me

to hear the Mussulman use the very terms to the Greeks which the Greeks lavished, whenever they dared, on their oppressors. Since, however, I have found that a Turk is an infidel in a Christian's eyes, and a Christian the same in the Turk's; so it is but a mutual exchange of compliments.

“The janizaries made a most vigilant search, and at last came close to my place of concealment. I held my breath, to stop the violent beating of my heart. The first man was satisfied; but the second remarked that the roof of the house must project beyond the apparent inner line, and he gave the frame which concealed me a kick; being convinced from the sound that the place was hollow, he without much ceremony tore away the planks, and beheld me. It is impossible to describe the excited features of the monsters as they viewed me, nor the flashing of their eyes as they lavished the most expressive looks upon me. I endeavoured to conceal my face, but they tore the veil from me. They spoke in earnest to each other, and as far as I could understand, both claimed me; and in so doing, forgot how

rigid is the law which protects the sanctuary of the harem; for they imagined me to be the property of the Greek below.

“ The delay soon made the collector impatient, and they left me; but not before they made me understand that if I said one word, my life would pay the forfeit. On their return, the collector left the premises, and I with pallid cheeks and blanched lips came from my supposed concealment.

“ ‘ Speak, girl,’ said the Greek ; ‘ what occasions that frightened look ?’

“ I told him instantly the truth; for I disdained to lie to the man who, whatever might be his intentions, had fed, housed, and clothed me. He ran to his wife, who instantly threw a veil over my face, and after making my dress appear as if it covered a deformity, I was desired to limp as if I were lame, and to follow her. I did so; and after a long and tedious journey, we arrived late at a small cottage, in which resided the most hideous exhibition of the female form. Words were interchanged, and I was sent to a miserable bed. Here I soon fell asleep,

“In the morning, I was alone with my gaoler. She eyed me with a look of hatred, and spat upon me for a Christian. ‘I’ll make money of you,’ said the wretched woman. ‘That dog of a Greek’s soul shall be saved the sin of selling one of his own religion. It is an act of grace in me. There, there; clean these things; before sunset, you shall be a great lady, or men’s eyes must be worse than those of age in a woman.’

“In this manner she continued muttering to herself; but I soon had reason to dread the consequences, for about noon a black man arrived. Without any ceremony, he lifted the veil from my face; he placed a handful of sequins in the withered palm of that detested, false, vindictive hag, and pointing to the door, bade me go out. I refused, resolutely refused; when his diabolic face grew darker, and with a gesture not to be misunderstood, I learnt that, to avoid an insult from this ruffian, I must comply with his desire. I was concealed in a cage covered over with thick gauze, and carried directly to the governor. He saw me, and waving his hand as a peculiar,

well-known signal, I was made over to the ladies of the harem. Here I sat down in a corner of the room, and became subject to the scrutiny and the jealous remarks of my rivals. From what they said, it was evident they doubted the reality of my appearance. One examined my dress, to see how much I was indebted to art for my figure; others rubbed my cheeks, and all declared my eye-brows and eye-lashes were pencilled and dyed. It was evident I created an unfavourable sensation. I heard the Prophet's name invoked to keep the bashaw from the pollution and evil eye of a child of the devil; and when called away in order to be dressed after my bath, according to the custom of the harem, I found that my residence with the Greek was paradise to the angry scowls which frowned upon me now.

"In the midst of all this unenvied envy on my part, a whisper passed round, which turned their malice into another direction. The chief of the harem gave orders for all the women to be prepared to start that night; the only one to remain, and to be well provided with every requisite of the first lady of the bashaw, was myself.

“ ‘What news is this?’ said one.

“ ‘She has bewitched him,’ said another.

“ ‘’Tis the evil eye of Sheitan,’ said a third.

And each, as she began to obey the mandate of the eunuch, gave vent to some reproach upon the supposed cause of their departure.

“ Dressed in the Oriental costume, and cleansed from all impurities of the hovel, I came forth more beautiful than ever, and heard the accumulated curses on my head. In vain I tried to make one friend in that society; they shunned me as their misfortune; and had it not been for the protection of an old woman, the face which they envied would have been disfigured by these furies.

“ Soon, however, these malignant spirits learnt that *I* was not the cause of this departure. Report, with its thousand tongues, soon spread abroad that the governor, who had never been to sea in his life, was made the capitan bashaw, or Turkish admiral; that a fleet was in the port ready to obey him, and that not an hour was to be lost in getting ready for his departure. His life would pay the forfeit of procrastination. Activity and success would

crown him with favours. His women he had ordered back to Constantinople; his new acquisition was to accompany him. Little was thought of me during the excitement which prevailed, and I was glad enough to escape even the glance of any eye. Before sunset, I was alone in that large room; then did I earnestly pray that in all the horrors in store for me I might be sustained in my virtuous resolutions.

“At about ten o'clock, I was approached with some respect by the very negro who had brought me to the palace. I was carefully veiled; and, with as much state as if I were a queen, I was taken to the port, and thence removed on board the vessel which conveyed me to the scene of this day's actions.

“The admiral, although a brave man, could not master that which overpowered him entirely — sea-sickness. To the very moment when he lost his life, he had never been free from it; nor had he even approached me until an hour before the engagement began, when he bade me retire to a place of security, and whatever happened, to remain concealed. The

desire of gold brought me to your view. I am your slave; I have told you my story; I have concealed nothing; and on the holy cross, I swear that, although my beauty nearly caused my ruin, my person has ever been respected. I am weary even of pleasing my benefactor. I crave your permission to seek some repose."

She waved her hand, and withdrew.

CHAPTER XVI.

“It must be so,” said Konigsmark; “either Isabella must be left here, or you must go to Calabria, and try to trace her origin. Seventeen years cannot have effaced the memory in the parents, and women never cease to hope; until the certainty of their bereavement is ascertained, they cling to the fond recollection of their children. In this case, it appears that the Count had offered a ransom. We must do this girl justice; and depend upon it, my honest friend Vratz, the God you worship will repay you in large proportions, if you could restore this girl.”

"It would be worth the trial, Count," replied his companion; "but I could not wander about, like a German merchant, with the woman as my pack; neither do I wish to leave you."

"Be it so. I will arrange for her care and comfort here until we return. I have volunteered to be the bearer of some communications of consequence to Alexandria, and to-morrow I leave the island. Speak to her of this, and remind her that we yet retain some of the age of chivalry; that a beautiful woman rescued by our arms shall be protected by our generosity. Our return will be within the month, and she must place that confidence in us which we repose in her honour. Speak to her kindly; endeavour to unknit that threatening brow of yours; softly modulate the voice; and to be impressive and imperative, press gently her fair hand—remember that with women the eye and the hand do more than the voice. You must endeavour, whilst asking her to acquiesce, to order her to obey; make her believe she points the way; and by suggesting the course, prompt her as to the proposition which will

thus appear to emanate from herself. You are a bold fellow, Vratz; but to guide a woman, the talent of the general more than the arm of the soldier is requisite; and remember, her situation, as protected by us, places her within the pale of calumny."

"That Count," said Vratz to himself, "is a wonder: he manages women as easily as a sailor feathers an oar; and when all the arts of poetry and impassioned language fail, I have known him command a tear from his eye, and that was irresistible. I must buy a Horace and Catullus, and see what studying under such masters, with hints from the Count, can effect. One thing seems absolutely requisite, which is, that I must make her believe she has the master mind, and that I follow her wishes, whilst she is obeying my orders. Talk of guiding the storm or stemming the cataract! what is that to the task of managing even the softest creature in creation."

Vratz succeeded admirably; and Isabella was placed under the protection of a lady of great sanctity, with sufficient of the plunder to establish her warmly in the affections of her com-

panion. Money is a better pleader than the best of counsels; it is the only irresistible power which man created for the tyranny of himself.

Fresh and fair blew the breeze which forced the felucca on her course to Alexandria. Anecdotes were rife of pirates and marauders who infested the Archipelago. There was no island which had not the history of some foul deed attached to it; and a single vessel passing near the Island of Candia, and escaping, was a marvel in sailors' minds; but such was the power obtained by the great gallantry shewn by Konigsmark, that every man on board the vessel believed himself free from danger whilst he walked her deck. For weeks they cared little, having provided themselves with chalk from St. Paul's Bay, at Malta—about as certain a safeguard from such calamities as being born in a caul is a protection against misfortunes in after-life. But sailors of all nations are proverbially superstitious, and superstition is the offspring of ignorance: thus, to sail on a Friday—to have a black cat for a shipmate—to be without a horseshoe nailed to the foremast—

to have a clergyman with a grey head—and a thousand other absurdities, have great weight; but the most serious of all is to omit breaking the shell of an egg, after eating its contents, and which thus unharmed becomes a vessel for the safe conveyance of witches, should it be thrown into the water. Konigsmark's mind was much tinctured with this darkness and ever since the Lapland witches walked off with their own house, Vratz had imbibed his master's weakness.

One object principally engrossed the minds of both—woman. Even the supernatural visitation of the person whose ring was worn and could not be displaced, was somewhat obliterated; but the Lady Elizabeth Percy, her beauty, and above all, her immense wealth, were the thought by day and dream by night of Konigsmark. Dangers and difficulties he courted for the pleasure of the excitement, but Lady Elizabeth was ever before him; and whilst, borne away by his love of adventure and travel, he had consented to undertake the hazardous communication of which he was the bearer, he had actually determined to return to England.

Vratz's mind was never idle on the subject of Isabella. Removed from the influence which her beauty had exercised over him, he began to repent the folly he had committed in not at once having used the right of the captor, and of having created a love, which now annoyed him immensely. He was somewhat jealous of his former master, whose success with women was unequivocal. Vratz had remarked how steadily the Count's eyes were always kept upon Isabella—how modestly they fell whenever hers chanced to meet his. A thousand remarks now rose to torture him; and the immense price of her liberation, his own enfranchisement, confirmed him in his uneasiness, and made him regard his benefactor with a jealous and a dangerous eye.

“What, always thinking of the black-eyed beauty?” said Konigsmark, as he touched the absent Vratz. “Planning, I dare to say, some splendid castle in Spain, to which you destine her to retire as the wife of the bold, aspiring Vratz. Well, such things have been; who knows but that her parents, in gratitude for her delivery, may endow her with a handsome fortune,” and

accept for their son-in-law the man who saved their child?"

"And supposing," said Vratz, "this child preferred yourself to me, what then?"

"She is a free person, privileged by her sex to vary her affections—then the chance would be mine; and I should with all courtesy refuse the destined honour."

"Of being her husband?" added Vratz.

"Even so; but in any other relation I should be flattered by her preference, that of course, even if she were your wife."

"I feel grateful for the honour you would confer on me."

"And ought to be thankful for the openness of the declaration."

"Is no woman then sacred in your eyes?"

"None; at least, those who are young and handsome. Believe me, Vratz, I am not so formidable an enemy as you may conceive; I never interfere with any past fifty; and for your wife to be secure against my assaults, let her be past that age, and, upon the honour of a Konigsmark, I will never even kiss her."

“And you never fear assassination in your daring intrigues?”

“I am armed at all points—as ready to love as to fight; it’s a matter of indifference to me which. He who opposes me is my enemy; and a brave bearing wins a woman’s esteem.”

“But Isabella?”

“Is safe whilst under my protection; released from that, and under the guardianship of her parents, then I would risk my life for an interview. I should like to scale the high wall which enclosed her; and in the shade of night, and doubly hid by the thick foliage, pour into her ear the declaration of my love. Ah! Vratz, my worthy companion in arms, but novice in love, know that there is a charm in the pale moon-light. There is a dangerous stillness when only the nightingale’s note is heard, or the chirrup of the vigilant cricket disturbs all nature’s repose; it is then that the calm air conveys more clearly our words, and then that women—dear, incautious women—listen with greater avidity to our de-

clarations. Stars are admirable witnesses to attest our sentiments; they look so clear and quiet all the time, and never start from their spheres to give evidence of our perfidy."

"But should a star fall at the moment you pointed to it."

"All the better; it would be a proof how eager it was to be your witness, and had come down for the purpose. When a woman listens, you may tell her anything, and she will believe it. Isabella would believe you were in love with her, but that would not hinder her from believing me also an admirer of her beauty. Power is a woman's ambition, and she is content to exercise it on one, when she cannot get six to feel and acknowledge her sway. I know you at this moment to be under her power, but there is one thing which would break the charm. If you could sell her, and any one offered a round sum, my life to a ducat you would value the gold more than the maiden. Ay, Vratz, gold, gold, gold! that is your idol, and not a bad shrine to worship at either."

"There is some truth in this, Count, but at present, I swear I love the beautiful Isabella."

"And I swear I don't believe you. Listen to my orders. We are getting close to Alexandria; although no longer my retainer, you are still my companion, and under my directions. Keep a quiet and a cautious tongue; be reserved to every one who speaks to you. What has been done, or what is doing at Malta, is unknown to you; in short, to all questions relative to other countries, appear ignorant. Amongst these Turks we might fare but indifferently, if it were known the cause we had espoused to their discomfiture. Ah! yonder is the land—our voyage has been prosperous; before dark, we shall reach the anchorage; have everything ready for our departure, for the vessel will continue her course to the Isle of Cyprus directly we have disembarked; and if a boat comes off, we shall not enter the port in the felucca. We may have much cause for all our presence of mind and cool determination. How beautifully soft the view becomes as the sun sinks, and

the wind dies with the day. Yonder toils the camel, as it wends its weary way to Alexandria, which grows fainter and fainter to the sight as the haze of the evening rises from the heated sands. There is a boat approaching. Quick, Vratz! and bring our scanty luggage on deck."

The boat came alongside, and Konigsmark and his companions jumped into her. The felucca altered her course, and glided silently along; the breeze from the land had just sprung up, and her large sails filled to the perfumed wind, which wafted on its wings the fragrance of the land.

CHAPTER XVII.

KONIGSMARK and Vratz put up that night at a caravansari, endeavouring, as much as possible, to avoid the other travellers, who, with their mules, drove into the huge square, and after unloading the tired brutes, listened to the song of the wandering tribes who subsist by the recital of anecdotes in verse.

Shortly after dark, Konigsmark, whose dress had been changed for the Armenian costume, left the caravansari, accompanied by a boy who spoke that low *Lingua Franca* so common

along the shores of the Mediterranean. It is a mixture of Arabic, Spanish, and Italian, and requires but little knowledge of the two latter-named to understand. He was conducted to a house, and was at once admitted; his guide was instantly discharged; for Konigsmark was one of those careful observers, that he never required assistance to retrace his steps.

The person to whom he introduced himself, as he produced a letter, spoke fluently Italian. He examined cautiously the signet attached to the parchment, and with a keen, penetrating eye, looked at Konigsmark; the latter met the searching gaze with all the confidence of indomitable courage, and stood in a careless attitude, apparently unconscious of the doubtful expression in the stranger. As yet, not a word had passed. The huge letter was opened and carefully perused.

“Good,” said the stranger; “I understand

the meaning; you can assist me, perhaps, in the details."

"Of what?" asked Konigsmark.

"Of this," said the stranger, pointing to the letter.

"Then I shall require a vast deal of intelligence," replied the Count; "for I have no more idea what is in that letter than I have of the Chinese language."

"You were entrusted with this letter from——"

"I really do not know whom," said the Count. "Enough even of this. I undertook to deliver the letter to you, and it is done."

"A word before we part. You must leave Alexandria to-morrow, or to-night, if it were possible. There are the wonders of the Desert to be explored, and Cairo to be seen. Within a fortnight, a vessel shall convey you to Spain, but no trace must exist of this letter. I see you were well advised as to the dress. I will

send an interpreter who can accompany you, to whom you will be known only as an inquisitive traveller. Can I assist you with money?"

"I have enough; but you could oblige me by changing the Italian coins."

"The faithful Mahomet, who will be near you on your travels, shall meet you to-morrow sufficiently provided; and on your return, if you refuse it as a reward, you can use your own wishes as to its return. It would sadly endanger the purpose of this letter if you were seen here: and this is my excuse for the apparent want of hospitality. It is getting late, and our doors are closed against the stranger usually earlier than this. Konigsmark bowed, and was soon asleep.

"At daylight, an old, wizened-faced Turk appeared, and became a companion of our hero. It was advised to take boat, and proceed by the Nile to Boulac, the port of Cairo; and one was speedily provided by Mahomet.

She was lateen-rigged, and with a fair wind, our traveller embarked, and made great progress. Konigsmark carefully watched the *faithful* Mahomet, for he knew mankind well, young as he was; and he thought that if no trace was to remain of the letter, Mahomet might be the faithful friend of his master, and reduce it to the certainty under the known fact that "dead men reveal no secrets." Vratz was desired to be cautious and watchful, but never to excite suspicion; there was an apparent frankness about the interpreter which disarmed the latter; but Konigsmark trusted little to appearances.

On board this boat, Vratz ate his first kabob, and the journey was performed without fatigue and without danger. At Cairo, they repaired to a caravansari. In these places there is always a large circular hall, the whole height of the building; in this is deposited all the merchandise or other stores with which the camels are laden; the camel-drivers sleep

amongst the packages, and are thus the guards of their cargoes. A gallery, built about fifteen feet from the ground, runs completely round the khan, supported by pillars, and from it open divers doors into small rooms. These rooms are generally the depositary of the more precious goods, and are also not unfrequently the lodging-places of the merchants. It was proposed by Mahomet to occupy three of these, but Konigsmark was contented with two; Vratz and himself inhabiting one, and Mahomet the other.

In this splendid city every nation of the earth may be seen—Arabs, Armenians, Syrians, Greeks, Copt, Christian, and Jew, alike are inmates, and little observation is attached to any person. Its situation is inferior to Constantinople, but in architecture it is far superior. In life and animation it surpasses Damascus, and in everything Jerusalem is inferior. The large buildings are of stone, whilst those of Constantinople are generally of wood,

and in Damascus they are externally of mud. In this city, containing twenty thousand inhabitants, and ten miles in circumference, a stranger may pass unnoticed, or at least be regarded without suspicion.

The active mind of Konigsmark turned every minute to advantage, whilst Vratz pondered over his lost Isabella, and thought only on the means of increasing his wealth. The god Mammon was ever before him.

At the southern extremity of the city, near the mosque of Sultan Hassan, stands at this present time a citadel. But a few years back it was a scene of dreadful slaughter in the massacre of the Mamalukes. From this place Mourad Bey, the only survivor, leapt his horse from the ramparts, a height of at least forty feet.

In the days of Konigsmark this was only a rising mound, from which was to be seen one of the finest views in the world, from the extraordinary difference within the range

of vision. To the eastward, the arid desert, yielding no sign of life or vegetation, dull, dreary, desolate, changing its hot sands into an occasional mirage. To the south and south-east, broken mounds and rocky hills (the stone quarries of Cairo) are disposed in vast masses, and with considerable grandeur. The mountains of Upper Egypt bound the horizon and terminate the desert.

The eye, fatigued at the monotony, turns to the stupendous pyramids, which seem piercing the sky; and after gazing for one moment on these mighty monuments, which have, in many cases, outlived the names of those they were erected to perpetuate, droops with fatigue, and rests upon the bosom of the Nile and the tall palm trees which adorn its banks. This mimic sea, extending itself over a wide surface, pursues its rapid course, and bears upon it the thousand vessels which spread their sails to the providential breeze, which ever increases as the river becomes

stronger in its flood. It is a scene of animation strangely contrasted with the silent, awful desert. There, too, between the pyramids and the city, are the ruins of ancient Cairo, and beyond beams in resplendent beauty the dark groves and lovely foliage of the island of Rhoda: here, again, is the wreck of time, and the verdure of spring and youth concentrated in one glance. Beyond the river appears the town of Djisch, situated amidst the beautiful groves of sycamore and fig-trees. Further onwards are the pyramids, towering over the ocean of sand forming the Lybian desert, and which encircles them in grand and gloomy solitude. At your feet is the city of Cairo itself, extending to the north, and surrounded on all sides, excepting towards the river, by heaps of sand. Imagination cannot picture anything more striking than these views. Life, with the busy hum of a thousand voices, rises from the city, and reminds the traveller of his mortality, whilst the dreary solitude of

the immediate neighbourhood chills him with the desolation of its withering aspect. Here is the luxuriance of vegetation gladdening the eye and delighting the heart—there, the monuments of the dead reigning in awful loneliness, amidst the vast, arid, unchanged, unchangeable desert.

To a mind such as Konigsmark's, these views, so feebly described, acted powerfully ; and had the faithful Mahomet been anxious to preserve the secret within his master's breast, then was the time to have plunged his dagger in the heart of Konigsmark. Far different was the thought of Vratz, who was unconscious of the associations, and who only remarked upon the excessive folly of spending so much money to so little purpose as erecting pyramids.

"It is strange," said Konigsmark to Mahomet, "that the pyramids should have outlived the names of their founders."

"Cheops erected the first and largest," said

the guide; "some of the others are of doubtful origin. What is it but destiny?"

The very word made Konigsmark's heart startle, and he answered, "Destiny, it is said, is wisely kept from the knowledge of man. His life, say philosophers, would be a scene of prolonged misery if his end were known to him; and yet, without rushing headlong into this concealed knowledge, how gladly would I read some portion of my life."

"Our sorcerers, famous in history, cannot foretel events, but they can call up the dead, or shew you in a second any living being you may demand."

"When any one can see my Isabella here," said Vratz, "I will believe the assertion; but," continued he to his companion, "Turks, Arabs, and Persians always were, and always will remain, liars."

"I can shew you a man," said Mahomet, "who shall call up in his presence any one you desire to see."

"It shall not be money, or its lavish expenditure, that shall hinder me in the gratification of my curiosity. Bring me this man, and, be he devil or saint, I care not, so that he tells me that she is alive, and that the young Lady Elizabeth Percy is still unmarried."

"Oh!" exclaimed Vratz, "is it in that quarter the wind sets! I thought he had had enough of the Norway witches and the ghost; and, with his romantic mind, I would scarcely believe a voice from the grave, if it gave him life to reach his thirtieth year—that is, if he has much money, and I am his companion."

"You will bring that man to-morrow?"

"It must be after the sun is set," replied Mahomet.

"Good!—but bring him."

CHAPTER XVIII.*

“THERE are strange things in this world, Vratz; and men of the soundest minds and most extensive learning have shared in super-

* I am indebted to Mr. John Hamlin Borrer for the contents of this chapter. The biographers of Konigsmark do not mention his having visited Cairo, but the letters still in existence confirm the superstition of his mind, and his readiness to credit the marvellous. Mr. Borrer when at Cairo called me up. I was accurately described, *and in uniform*. On that very day I had on my uniform, (for I had grown somewhat stout since last in harness) preparatory to a ball at the Tuileries, and it was the only day I had worn it for years. The idea of calling up Vratz arose from one of Mr. Borrer's party calling up one who was present, and the whole description is given exactly as it happened, and principally in Mr. Borrer's own words.

stition equal to mine. Who knows that the creed which acknowledges one good and one evil power be not correct. The ancient Chaldeans, the Jews, the Mahomedans, and the early Christians, have all more or less sought to fathom the secrets of existence by means of sorcerers."

"But suppose," said Vratz, gaily, "he calls upon the devil himself, and the devil appears."

"Then, my worthy companion," said Konigsmark, "you will only have the honour of an introduction a little sooner than I anticipated. I fear no devil: it is a bugbear to awe the poorer classes; an imaginary spectre, made palpable to guilty minds when conscience has overawed reason; it is a being which exists only in the belief of the timid, the guilty, the superstitious."

"Then, according to your own reasonings, wise men believe in the devil, and so do children, idiots, and murderers; in this hetero-

geneous mass you embody all creation. I'll make the sign of the cross four times, and spit over my left shoulder; if that does not balk him, he is omnipotent."

Already had Vratz begun to apprehend the visit from his satanic majesty; and Konigsmark himself, who firmly believed in everything connected with witchcraft, was prepared to see wondrous works. The sun had now touched the horizon, and the long shadows grew indistinct, and soon vanished with the great light which created them. Konigsmark and Vratz were seated in the largest room of the great caravansari, which they engaged, and paid for at a high price.

"I would rather have seen this by daylight," said Vratz; "not that I fear the darkness, but I am of opinion with a learned Frenchman, that miracles ought always to be performed in the open air and in broad daylight. Holy Virgin! what is this?"

It was only Mahomet who entered, introducing the sorcerer.

"Tell me, Mahomet," said Konigsmark, "do you believe in the power of this man yourself?"

"Not the least; although I hear he borrows his powers from the Prophet, and invokes him from the Koran."

"And the devil!" said Vratz.

"Oh!" replied Mahomet, "we need not fear him, for it is the feast of the Ramazan."

The sorcerer now entered the room, and making the oriental salaam, seated himself in the corner; some coffee and sweetmeats were handed to him, of which he partook freely.

Konigsmark eyed him with all the suspicion of a man prepared for fraud; whilst Vratz, reassured from seeing him eat, remarked in his own language, which Mahomet did not understand, that he was satisfied it was no devil, for it was a well known fact that gentleman never drank coffee.

Abdel Ckader el Mergbee—for this was the name of the sorcerer—was a man of a fine personal appearance; he was about six feet in height, stout, but not of unseemly proportion; about seventy years of age; his beard and whiskers white, and his skin of a fair complexion. This last was particularly noticed by Konigsmark; and on his remarking it to the interpreter, the answer from that grave personage was, “that he resembled a Mamaluke more than an Arab; but that he was a Sheik of a tribe of Bedouins inhabiting the Nubian desert.” The dignified manner of the stranger bespoke him of good origin, and acquainted with the manners and customs of the world. He took the proffered pipe without hesitation, although in these countries it is a compliment only paid to equals. In tracing his long descent, he affirmed, with all the calmness of truth, that in his veins ran the blood of those ancient Egyptians whose supernatural power had never

been doubted; and, he continued, as he addressed Konigsmark, whom he recognised, in spite of his dress, as a Christian, "in *your Koran* do you not read of that sorceress who caused the forms of those long dead to appear to one of the governors of Syria? From these, and such as these," said the old man, as his countenance became more animated with his subject, "am I descended; and although I have only inherited a power weakened by the neglect of those through whom it has been transmitted to me, I yet retain sufficient to effect those things which none but myself can accomplish. Those who come after me of my own blood shall inherit this mystery, and the power shall not deteriorate from my neglect."

Konigsmark, whose manner evinced the highly polished nobleman, prefaced his questions with great civility, craving pardon from the sorcerer, if, in asking some few, he should unconsciously be guilty of a rudeness.

"We read," said the Count, "in many of our books, that all those who have supernatural power, inherit it, or receive it, from that being of darkness, the fallen angel, who warred against his God."

"I feel quite convinced," said Vratz, "that you believe the old gentleman to be allied to the devil, or you never would have mentioned his relation in such elegant terms."

"I answer you with the words of truth, as our Prophet is my judge. I have no connexion with that power of darkness, nor do I receive my power from any of his spirits. By fasting and praying that power is increased; and if any power came from him, the prayers to the Prophet and the mortification of the flesh would be but useless invocations."

During this discourse, Vratz, now quite satisfied that he had nothing to fear, remarked the sorcerer's dress. He wore a light blue turban, a considerable height from his head,

and ornamented in front with a large stone, resembling in appearance those pebbles worn on the shoulders in the highland costume: the folds were full, and the turban large. The outer vest, which was of a dark green colour, resembled a common dressing-gown; it extended from his shoulders within two inches of the ground; the under garment was of mixed colours, of Damascus silk. He wore round his waist a Syrian scarf; his legs were bare from about six inches above the ankle, to which point they were covered by white trousers; and in conformity with the general gaudiness of the dresses of those countries, there was intermixed in the scarf and the under vest, red, green and yellow colours. His slippers were red. There was a pleasing and benevolent expression of countenance, but he retained the oriental gravity, and throughout the long interview never smiled once.

"To raise the dead," said Konigsmark, "is to possess a power beyond credence. The greatest miracle which confirms our creed is that which a God alone could effect; and to depute this power to another, and to one whose religion is in direct opposition—whose exterminating sword would have swept the heresy from earth, and founded the crescent on the ruins of the cross—surpasses comprehension. I am incredulous, and must doubt the evidence of my own senses."

"Ask him, good Count," said Vratz, "in those horrid expressions of yours, if he can raise the devil?"

Konigsmark shaped the question with all the delicacy of the gentleman, and was answered "that fallen angels were beyond his power, which was limited alone to human beings."

"We will proceed with the charm," said the sorcerer. "Have you here any boy who has not arrived at the age of puberty?"

"No," replied Konigsmark; "but Mahomet can soon find one."

"Bring any one from the bazaar," said the sorcerer; "it is immaterial who it is, so long as his age is not beyond that I have indicated."

"I will go myself," said Konigsmark, "and then I shall be sure that no connivance can take place. Stay here, Vratz, and watch with the eye of suspicion and curiosity."

During Konigsmark's absence, the sorcerer remained apparently in prayer; but the absence was of short duration, for the Count soon returned, bringing with him a young, wild-looking Bedouin, whose whole dress consisted of a kind of sack, with sleeves; round his waist was passed a rope, and he wore the same article wound round his head, in imitation of a turban; the magician noticed him as he entered, inclined his head in token of approbation, and then motioned that he was about to begin.

A large pan of charcoal was ordered to be placed in the centre of the room. He requested a sheet of paper, and a pen, and some ink. Taking the paper, he wrote upon it seven sentences from the Koran, each sentence occupying one line. The seven lines were then carefully cut from the paper separately; and taking one of these, he placed it in some white powder, then crumpling the paper in his hand, he threw it on the charcoal; immediately a thick white column of smoke rose to the lofty ceiling, the arabesque carving of which presented a strange and striking appearance, as it became discernible through the thin veil which at first concealed it. At this moment, the magician became impressive in his prayers, and fervently invoked his familiar spirit. The words were treasured by Mahomet, and translated instantly to Konigsmark. The burthen of the invocation was, that "the veil might be torn from his eyes, and that the sight that hour might be clear and penetrating."

Two seats were now placed close together, the sorcerer occupying one, and the boy the other; then drawing the charcoal close to him, he took the boy by the hand, and after gazing on him steadfastly for some moments, he proceeded to draw a double square on the palm of his hand, (two lines across each side, making eight lines in all;) in the small spaces or squares at each corner he placed hieroglyphics, which Mahomet remarked were not Arabic nor any language he understood. The boy was now desired to gaze fixedly on his hand, and on no account to lift his head.

The magician, standing up, held his hands on the back of the boy's head, uttering incantations with great fervour, appearing completely absorbed in his occupation. He then crossed himself,* and Vratz, whose eyes

* In crossing himself, he did nothing unworthy of a true believer. The cross is revered by Mahomedans; they look upon Jesus and Moses as prophets, inferior only to Mahomed.

were starting from his head, immediately did the same; whilst Konigsmark, catching somewhat the apprehension, or the religious feeling of his companion, imitated the movement, the former whispering to the Count, "He is providing a friend from both places."

The magician now raised his eyes to the ceiling, and taking the boy's hand in his own, poured on the palm a small quantity of ink, which he spread carefully over the hand with his finger, when, overpowered and exhausted, he sunk down upon his seat and remained motionless. A creeping fear came over Vratz, whilst Konigsmark, who knew not fear, inclined his body forward, to watch more closely the proceedings.

The sorcerer, having recovered himself, asked the boy what he saw. At that moment nothing was visible on his blackened hand; but shortly afterwards, with an expression of great surprise, the boy declared he saw a black man sweeping

the floor; no sooner had that passed, than a landscape appeared, the Nile and its many palm trees which grow along its banks, being particularly mentioned. The boy then said, without any questions being asked him, "that he saw a crowd of people moving about in the greatest confusion, but nothing else was clear and defined. Ah! now," he continued, "it is more distinct, and I see two or three at a time walking. Now there is a green flag and green tent, and a white flag and white tent."

The boy kept his eyes fixed upon his hand, but now was silent; no question was asked, but the magician, with curious and inquisitive glance, seemed to hint, from his look, that he expected more. At this time, the most profound silence reigned in the apartment, and the magician, evidently uneasy at the result, threw another paper, previously rolled in the white powder, into the charcoal; again the white cloud rose as a pillar, diffusing itself

over the room. It passed; and still the boy's lips were sealed. Disappointment was now visibly depicted on the countenance of the magician, who threw more charms upon the charcoal, but still with no better effect. "Seeth thou," he asked, "no red flag—no red tent."

"No," answered the boy.

The magician here expressed his disgust, and said, "*That boy* COULD *not see!* Go, seek me another."

"This must be a very precocious climate," said Vratz; "but I will find one whose age shall be a guarantee of his virtue. But to look at this ragged urchin, and to think that——"

"Go—go, Vratz," said Konigsmark, interrupting him at a convenient time.

Vratz shortly returned, and with him came a child of about seven years of age. Exactly the same incantations and the same preparation were observed, and the remarks of the objects seen corresponded exactly to those of

the first boy; but this one said, "Now I see the red flag and the red tent." The magician said, in a firm voice, "Bring the sultan—pitch the tent;" when the boy remarked, "The tent *is* pitched—it is a large green tent."

"Then call the sultan," said the magician. "Is he not come?"

"No," replied the boy; "no, not yet; but his janizaries appear, bearing his scimitar. Now—now he comes, upon his white horse—he is here—now he dismounts—he has entered his tent."

"My work has prospered," said the magician. "This boy sees clearly. Ask of him whatever you require to know; call up whom you wish to see, and in the dark glass of that hand he will appear."

The magician then left the boy, near to whom he had been sitting, as before mentioned, and withdrew to a corner of the room.

"I fear to call the dead," said Konigsmark; "for this wonderful proof of the magician's

power renders the place unholy ; but the living may appear. Call up the Lady Elizabeth Percy."

The boy called the name three times.

"At your demand, a messenger is gone for her, and now she appears; she is a young girl, not more than thirteen; she is dressed as a bride, and walks with mincing steps—her high-heeled shoes prevent a quicker motion. Oh! she is wonderfully dressed, and is walking to the altar of a church—she is hurried—she is gone."

"Wonderful," said Konigsmark, as he leaned forward, and with his piercing eyes watched the black hand before him. "Call up quickly the Countess of Algernon."

The name was called three times, and at the third call she appeared.

"I see," said the boy, "an old woman magnificently dressed, but dressed as we never see in Cairo; she seems to have another head of hair besides her own, frizzled up about her

ears; her dress is made tight and narrow to the waist, and ends in a point; she seems to have something long training behind her; there are fine jewels round her neck, and there are black patches upon her face; she has a kind of under-dress, with a broad black lace round the bottom;* her neck and arms are bare."

"By the Virgin! it is to the life; and if the urchin did not see it, how could he describe that which it is evident, from his childish and ragged appearance, he could neither have read nor heard."

"She is gone," said the boy.

"And to the wedding, and I linger here!—

* I have followed here Pepys' description in 1660. We find the following in an account of the times.—"The beauties of the Court of Charles II., and those whose rank and fortune enabled them to follow the fashions of the day, discarded the straight-laced dresses with the straight-laced manners of their puritanical predecessors; bare necks and arms, full and flowing draperies, and trains of the richest satins, or velvets, form the characteristic features of the female habits of this licentious period." Custom reconciles us to everything, however bare or uncovered.

my hope, my most aspiring hope, dashed to the ground!"

"Call up George Borosky," said Vratz. "If justice had been done him, he would come from his grave."

If the boy had drawn the description from the being before him, nothing could have been more correct; and Vratz, who, in his impatience, had thrown off his upper vest, and who puffed volumes of smoke from his pipe, became excited and alarmed.

"Call up Isabella Marvelli," said Vratz.

Three times did the boy call, and three times did he say the messenger had gone for her; but no one appeared. The sorcerer, who kept an attentive ear to everything, asked "if she were living or dead."

"Living within this fortnight," said Vratz, "and residing at——"

Konigsmark put his hand over Vratz's mouth, and cautioned him thus to silence.

A white powder was thrown in, the smoke

again rose, the boy again summoned the messenger, but he never returned.

"There is no one of that name alive," said the sorcerer, "or she dare not refuse my power; and if dead, she lies unburied, and has not as yet come within my influence. Perhaps," said the sorcerer, "the one you seek passes under a name which is not her own."

"And the devil," said Vratz, in a rage, "does not recognise an alias!"

"One more," said Konigsmark, "and I have done." He passed his hand rapidly across his forehead, as if in thought, and said, "Call up Christopher Vratz."

"Ah!" muttered Vratz, "and keep your eyes on your hand, for we know him well."

No sooner was the name called than the boy said, "You must be quick—he will not remain long."

"What colour is his outer dress about his shoulders," asked Vratz.

"He has none on. I cannot see anything but what is white—he has a long stick in his mouth—he will not stay—he is gone."

"And I will be gone," said Konigsmark, "and no longer juggle with the devil, or any unknown power. What manner of man is this who can call from the grave the body which is dead, and which, animating it with imaginary life, can picture itself to one who never saw the living man. Now do I firmly believe in sorcery and witchcraft, else how can two boys, who could not by possibility have known each other, see exactly the same things, and that on a black hand. The devil's looking-glass, according to Dr. Dee, was a stone. Here a better power looks on darkness."

"This must be *palmistry*," said Vratz. "It is a guess, after all. Of what use is it this man seeing people who cannot concern him. They deal in generalities—they guess."

"That cannot be," said Konigsmark. "A few years ago, the dress in England was the

contrary to what it is now, and how could that poor, ignorant boy know of what country came a Percy or an Algernon?—how, upon his darkened hand, can he see at all, and figures of different countries, different costumes, different features, be described? Whilst reason and philosophy reject these things as absurd, the heart acknowledges the fact. Pay that man, Mahomet. I will away to England, and confirm my fate.”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE boy "had seen clearly," as the magician said; at the very time that the Lady Elizabeth Percy was seen in the dark mirror of the Arab's hand, she was dressed in bridal array, and at the tender age of twelve, or rather, as the historian remarks, "before she had attained the age of thirteen, the Lady Elizabeth Percy was married, so far at least as the performance of the ceremony went, to Henry Cavendish, styled Earl of Ogle, the only son of Henry, second Duke of Newcastle, of that house." Lord Ogle immediately took the name of Percy.

The immense wealth of the young heiress, and the intriguing behaviour of the Dowager Countess of Algernon, made this marriage the subject of very general conversation in London. The king himself attended, and in one of his many letters to Montagu in Paris, relates the circumstances, with some light and familiar remarks as to the age of the bride, and the probability of her returning to the nursery before she would require a nurse.

Every display which money could command was lavishly expended in the bridal feast, and the poor little infant who had figured as the chief performer in this serious exhibition, was desired to retire to her chamber by the Lady Algernon, and to seek some repose before the evening's dance, at which she was to appear, whilst her husband drank many a brimming toast to the honour of his king, and the many nobles who had attended at the ceremony.

Lady Algernon had omitted nothing which could attract attention. The dress of the bride

had been exactly in accordance with the fashion of the day; and she overlooked, in her desire to follow the custom, the absurdity of dressing up a child of thirteen in all the magnificence of a bride. She was half hidden under the weight of her ornaments, and seemed bedizened out like the wax figures representing the Virgin Mary, in churches where superstition is stronger than devotion. Of all absurdities, that of making youth mimic age is the most absurd: it is ridiculous enough when the old and the haggard imitate the dress and the manners of youth and sprightliness; but to deck forth "the beauty and the sheen of youth," "in all the glaring impotence of dress," is so gross a folly, that none can remark it without censure, or behold it without regret.

Lord Ogle appeared in the new fashion which his sovereign had only a month before brought into public notice. That variable monarch who, in 1666, declared his determination of adopting a style of apparel which

"he was resolved never to alter," had already altered three times. Evelyn mentions that this costume consisted of a long close vest of black cloth or velvet, pinked with white satin; a loose surtout or tunic over it of an oriental character; and instead of shoes and stockings, buskins and brodequins. On the 18th of October, the king "put on his new dress *solemnly*," yet within a few months the whole garb and fashion was altered: high hats had dwindled into low-crowned hats, the feathers of which waved in air, and seemed to court the breeze, and hung idly along the rim. The monarch could not control the fashion, although we find from Pepys that even the mouche on the face was subject to court control. "This day," says the quaint author, November 4th, 1660, "Mrs. Pepys wore *one black patch by permission*." It appears that the brims of the hats were turned up in various manners, and that the most popular was "the Monmouth cock," named so after the unfortunate duke of that name."

Lord Ogle appeared in a long square-cut coat, with buttons and button-holes all the way down; and this fashion was also extended to the waistcoat. The sleeves of the coat came no further than the elbows, where they were turned back, and formed an immense cuff; the shirt sleeves were fastened at the wrists, and ruffled, being decorated with ribands. "The stiff band and falling collar were superseded by a neckcloth or cravat of Brussels or Flanders lace, tied with riband under the chin, the ends hanging down square; and the broad hat, which had already been turned up, or "cocked," behind, in 1667, was sometimes entirely surrounded by short feathers, which fell curling over the brim." Such was the style and fashion of the day, and it is curious to trace how fashions revolve; the French sac, or saque, was in vogue a few years since. "My wife," says Pepys, "this day, March 2nd, 1669, put on her French gown called a sac, which becomes her very well."

The poor little girl, thus sacrificed to the

intrigue of Lady Algernon, had given her hand but not her heart to Lord Ogle. All the absurdity of dress could scarcely wean her infant mind from the fact, that if she had a preference for any man, it was the Count Konigsmark; he had left that impression which kindness ever leaves upon the young and the unoccupied. Quite in vain was she told of the beauty of her dress—and that is a subject to which even women listen with sparkling eyes and attentive ears. The bare neck and arms, the full and flowing drapery, the train of the richest satin, were all reverted to; but the child still shed tears; and more than once was rebuked by her grandmother as one unworthy of the name and lineage of a Percy, when she expressed her dislike to Lord Ogle, and her preference for the Swedish Count. She was married, solemnly married—and when the ball was at its height, was desired to retire to her apartment, where, under the protection of her nurse, and the glare of a

night lamp, she slept as innocently and as soundly as ever did the Lady Elizabeth Percy before she gave herself in marriage to the Earl of Ogle.

This early marriage was by no means a very singular event with the nobility; for amongst others, the Countess of Sussex, daughter of the Duchess of Cleveland, was married a few days after she had completed her twelfth year.

In the marriage of Lady Elizabeth Percy, the intrigues of Montagu had prevailed. Lord Ogle was his great friend, and from the power he acquired by his bride's fortune, he anticipated an extension of his own. Montagu always wanted money, and here was a means of obtaining it. The marriage took place in 1679, and Lord Ogle, although allowed occasionally to sit with and visit his bride, was always carefully watched by Lady Algernon, who entertained some suspicion that the husband might exercise his right and authority over his wife, and by taking her to the conti-

ment, leave the grandmother in all the loneliness of solitude.

The child was still treated as a child—the kiss imprinted on her lips neither flushed the countenance nor caused a quicker emotion of the heart—the eye neither melted with expectation, nor did the limbs tremble with delight. Drawing for queen on Twelfth-day would have been a prize of greater value in the child's mind, than drawing in the great lottery of life her future lord and master. Still the feast and the merriment resounded. Lord Ogle was esteemed the most fortunate man in England, and amidst all the scene and long protracted revelry, not a soul mentioned by accident the Count Konigsmark but the "bride;" and she childishly remarked to her grandmother that Lord Ogle was neither so young nor so handsome as the Swede.

"Child," said the Lady Algernon, "that remark is neither prudent nor wise; a comparison between your own husband and another

man may be made in confidence to a friend; but you are yet an infant, and in a few years you will know how dangerous it is to trust even the most sincere of your friends with the feelings of your heart. The merry toast which resounds in the hall is to your honour; still the ceremony is little more than nominal; and if Lord Percy kisses your little pale cheek as he wishes you a good night's rest, you will on no account return it, but with the formal and proper reserve I have endeavoured to inculcate, you will withdraw with a curtsy to his Lordship—thus—and retire to the nursery; your doll will remain your companion. I crave your pardon, Doctor Locke," continued the Countess, who then perceived that the wisest man of the age had overheard the quaint advice; "I was endeavouring to draw the child's attention to the usages of society."

The Doctor bowed, as men bowed in those days; and having paid rather a cold compliment to the formal curtsy the Countess had

made, he without further ceremony lifted the bride in his arms and kissed her. "Poor little child!" he said—"in these days of youth and liveliness, the young mind rejoices more in the hours of relaxation from study, in the joyous moments of youthful pastime, than in the consideration of that ceremony which should form our happiness or misery. I crave your Ladyship's pardon," he continued, as he placed the child again upon its feet, "I forgot you were a married woman, and that by thus dangling you in my arms, I might excite the jealousy of your husband." There was a slow, cool enunciation of these words, which did not escape Lady Algernon; she felt the satire—nay, she saw the arrow, but could not ward it off.

"Fore Heaven, Mr. Locke," she said, with her usual haughtiness, "one would imagine the Lady Elizabeth had done what is unusual. Is it a sin for those of mature age to insure the happiness of those younger than themselves,

by using the experience of this world as their best guide? Surely one of my age is better able to discriminate than the child before us."

"Even so," replied the Doctor; "I admit that if youth could see with the eyes of experience, and with the coolness of disinterestedness, it were perhaps better. In all marriages where the parties are of tender age, passion is mistaken for love, and desire for affection; in this case I apprehend that neither one nor the other is likely to usurp the place of childish innocence."

"It is an alliance, sir, of which I am proud, and of which Montagu approves."

"And therefore no one else," continued the Doctor, "has a right to be dissatisfied. I speak not of individual, but of general cases. What happiness can be anticipated in the union of two persons of the same age, and before experience has lifted the bandage of ignorance? Is it reasonable to expect, that even at the age of twenty-one, when the boy is scarcely eman-

cipated from the thralldom which surrounds education, and the woman—for woman she is at that age, and never will be more of a woman—happiness will be permanent? When she who ought to be ruled naturally aspires to govern, in the struggle for supremacy, all the charm of married life is lost in the contest. I have lived long in this world, and I never yet knew one instance of early marriages terminating happily. For a few years the appearance may deceive the inquisitive, but when the charms fail which first attracted—the desire, which was called love, ceases, and coldness and indifference ensue. The man should always be ten years older than the woman, and no man should marry until he is at least twenty-eight.”

“Nor, consequently, any woman until she is eighteen. I understand the allusion, Doctor, but in the family of the Percys——”

“Oh, I crave your Ladyship’s pardon. I have no doubt, although there is no royal road

to learning, there is a noble path to happiness, and I trust my young friend, the infant bride, may be conducted through life by that unfrequented road."

CHAPTER XX.

"In a few hours, Vratz, you will again behold your Isabella."

"She either is dead and unburied, or she has another name," replied Vratz, as he remembered the Sorcerer's words, and applied them to the Count's remark.

"If dead," said Konigsmark, "there is an end to your love; and if under a false name, there is a new incentive to trace her origin. I hate the possession of an object obtained without risk, or without something to excite curiosity; the charm of an intrigue lies in its danger. The boy who would pass a thousand

apple trees by the road side, would climb a fence to obtain the fruit which seems protected from his grasp; and thus even I would scarcely care to wed the Lady Elizabeth with all her fortune, if the course of love ran smoothly, and no eddy of opposition occasioned a difficulty."

Two days after this, the felucca, which had been provided by the discreet Mahomet, arrived at Malta. There was no money received for the Count's passage, and a present of a sabre was accepted, after much pressing, by the captain.

"That is the best way to travel," said Vratz; "everything done at the expense of another, in which we participate, I consider an actual benefit in life. Wine is sweeter when we do not pay for it; women more desirable when another pays for the dress; and even war becomes more to be reconciled when the conquered party pays all expenses. You have grown sad, Count, latterly."

"It is the delay which we must experience, and the uncertainty of the fate of your Isabella,

which make me thoughtful. I must and will away to England instantly; but I cannot allow that beauty to remain unprotected, and without resources."

Vratz gave a deep sigh, and fixed his small piercing eyes upon the Count, as if to read his heart. Konigsmark's appeared as innocent as an infant's.

Having put up at a small house which offered shelter to the traveller, Vratz departed instantly to seek his lady. Not that one particle of love inspired his step, or one grain of affection animated his avaricious heart. No; his whole soul was employed in the calculation of what the father would give for his child—such a child as Isabella—in all her maiden purity, and all her acknowledged beauty.

Konigsmark went to account to the senior knight of Malta for the performance of the charge entrusted to him; he returned before Vratz, and was startled at the hasty step of his former retainer.

"By the Virgin!" said Vratz, as he entered the room, and threw himself carelessly on a seat, "it will go hard with some before I am thus balked. I have been fooled, but no man or woman ever yet deceived Vratz and lived a year to boast of it."

"And now that you have unburthened your mind by your threat, may I ask," said Konigsmark, "to what all this farrago of nonsense refers?"

"Simply this," said Vratz; "that Isabella is not to be seen, and that there are as many rumours as oranges on the island, that she is either to take the veil, or to be married to some adventurer."

"And where is she concealed?"

"Who knows but that Egyptian Sorcerer? Some say she is taken to Civita Vecchia; some to the Boschetta; whilst others affirm she is secluded in the Island of Goza."

"And what did you do to ascertain the truth?" asked Konigsmark.

"Listened to all, and believed none; asked

at the house, and had the door slammed in my face; gazed at the lattice at a man who looked like a tom cat with a tooth-ache; and returned here, with the recollection of several titters and laughters which saluted me. By my faith! although I am not as handsome or as well-proportioned as the Apollo, I am not more ill-favoured than the animal who looked as spitefully at me, as if I were stealing its milk. What's to be done, Count? Some other will return her to her father. I shall lose my love, and lose my reward."

"Put the latter first, for it is uppermost in your mind; we will talk of this after our dinner. In the meantime, run to the port, and inquire what vessels are likely to sail, and when, to any port either in Sicily, Italy, France, or Spain."

"And you will watch for Isabella?"

"That would be setting the cat to guard the cream. Ah, ah!" continued Konigsmark, as he looked at the disappointed countenance

of Vratz, "another mouse has nibbled the bait. Go—go, good Vratz; think more of the ships and their sailing, and leave Isabella to her tom cat."

No sooner had Vratz departed, than Konigsmark, his eyes beaming with delight, left the house; in a few minutes he returned with a man who brought a bundle and a guitar, which were placed in a corner of the sleeping-room, when again the Count sallied forth, and with rapid steps proceeded to that part of the town now known as the Florian gate. Here he entered a small house to which mariners sometimes resorted, and where the numerous gossips of the town sipped their hot coffee, and smoked their long pipes. Directing himself to a table, at which some sea-faring people regaled themselves, he inquired concerning the different vessels in the harbour, and of their destination; and calling for some punch, a liquor most admirably concocted at Valetta, he became a very agreeable addition to those who, whilst they drank of his bowl, willingly

answered his questions. By degrees, he led them from the original subject to that which is ever uppermost in the sailor's mind—women. That sex have no more ardent admirers than those who see least of them, and perhaps solely for that very reason. All now became talkative, and all knew, of course, the most lovely creature in existence.

“Nonsense!” said one, “you are always ranting and raving about that girl with the red hair and crimson cheeks. Is she comparable to Julia, who, with her large blue eyes and flaxen hair, looks like Eve in petticoats?”

“I hate red hair,” said one—“and I hate blue eyes,” said another—“that’s to say,” continued he—“that I don’t care if the eyes are black, blue, grey, cat’s, gooseberries, or speckled, as long as the girl is young, and her figure from stem to stern neat and trim.”

“Aye, you may all talk of your beauties,” said a weather-beaten fellow, “but the Italian girl is worth them all.”

Every one seemed to know the woman thus

alluded to, and every one willingly acknowledged her beauty. She seemed to be of public notoriety, and all seemed to agree that it was absolutely a sin to allow such a craft to be moored in the dark roadstead of a convent, and that no one was bold enough to cut her out.

It required but another bowl to obtain the history of this beauty; and Konigsmark soon learnt, that the lady under whose care Isabella had been left, had secretly favoured the advances of an elderly inhabitant of the island, and that the girl, rather than admit the admirer to any hope of success, resolved to take the veil; that in order to frustrate this, the lady had removed her to a house outside the Florian gate, which overlooked the harbour of Valetta, and which was surrounded by a stone wall, quite high enough to damp any hope of escape; that the former residence had passed into the hands of a man, who little dreamt of the annoyance he was likely to experience from the

curiosity of others, who believed the beauty still there, and who therefore exhibited the unenviable description of face given by Vratz, as a check to inquisitive eyes, at his lattice,—which had been the favourite place occupied by Isabella. Having gained all the information he required, he returned home at the dinner hour. He found Vratz with a considerable appetite, and no small degree of passion.

“The ships, Vratz—when do they sail?”

“Not one in the port will go for a fortnight, and then they all seem inclined to sail together out of the harbour, and to separate for the different ports of the Mediterranean.”

“The Santa Maria, Vratz?”

“She will not sail for a month.”

“The Josepha?”

“The captain’s sick, and wont sail; he is bound for Messina, which, perhaps, it would be as prudent for us to avoid.”

“The Santissima Trinidad?”

“Bound to Genoa; they say she has got the plague aboard.”

"The Bella Maria?"

"St. Francisco assist me to patience!" said Vratz; "she requires a new mast, and will not sail until she gets it, which may be, judging from the laziness here, in about six months."

"The Lucia di Terracina?"

"Notsea-worthy—sprung a leak last voyage, and was only saved by the captain putting his great-coat in the hole."

"The Speronare Carlotta?"

"Only going to Nota Bay, and is so full she cannot take an extra compass."

"The Isabella di Napoli?"

"Ah!" said Vratz, with a sigh, "curse the very name; you seem to know as much of the vessels as I do."

"And a little more, Vratz; I see you are determined to stay for a fortnight, during which time all the vessels now in port will be half way to their destinations. Never mind, I will do all I can to meet your wishes; although be assured that I neither fear the meeting at Messina, the plague on board the

Santissima Trinidad, the sprung mast on board of the *Bella Maria*, or the ominous leak in the *Lucia*; every one of these vessels sail within five days, and there is not one requiring the repairs you have ingeniously invented. Take another flask of this Cyprus wine, or try another flagon of Zante, but avoid the Rosolio, or you will be sick for the fortnight, and unable to seek for your love during the whole time. I recommend you to walk half over Valetta, from the Strada Reale to the Strada Ponente, and so round to the Strada Mezzodi; perhaps you may get some information which will not require a fortnight's time to follow up. In the meantime I shall go to the port, and taking a boat, amuse myself by inspecting the various vessels, and looking at some of those we brought into port. Thank Heaven! our absence seems to have been the grave of our reputation; and we are not singular in discovering the wonderful forgetfulness of those on whom favours have been conferred."

It wanted yet an hour to twilight; the sun

had not yet set, and the cool evening air had enticed many to walk abroad. Vratz's whole soul was bent on the discovery of Isabella. He left the hostellerie—his step was rapid—his eye quick—his imagination vivid. Hundreds he followed whose shape resembled that of her he sought, and no sooner was hope baffled, than another object again inspired it. In the search, and the occupation, the time soon passed; and as darkness began to veil all objects in indistinctness, he found himself outside of the gates, sitting down on the rising ground which overlooks the busy scene of a harbour, and where now stands the town of Florian. For a time he was amused by the bustling activity which prevailed previous to the dead silence of the tired sailor. Here and there boats crossed the harbour, each carrying a light in her bows, skimming about, and flitting from place to place, like the Will-of-the-wisp; whilst in the clear water beneath him, the bright stars above were reflected as in a mirror. By de-

grees the voices on board grew fainter and fainter, until at last the cheerful songs of seamen entirely ceased, and all nature seemed hushed in repose. The calmness of the scene quite overcame him, and even Vratz, whose mind was never attuned to harmony, or overpowered by imagination, seemed possessed by the silence around him, and sat in idle listlessness. He ran over in his mind the many scenes of his youth; they flashed across his imagination with the rapidity of lightning; and until he came to the discovery of Isabella on board the Turkish vessel, each scene was displaced by another. But now the last one riveted his attention; beautiful she was, and when called to memory in the stillness of that clear, lovely evening, her attractions became more sensibly impressed, and all his soul was at that moment a fervent desire, which he mistook for love.

He remained at least an hour enjoying his meditations, when his attention was awakened

by the sound of a guitar, which appeared not far distant, and in the direction of a house surrounded by a wall. Believing it came from one who sat at an open window, perhaps, like himself, enjoying the cool breeze of the night, and to whom the moon supplied the place of a lamp, he crept gently towards the place ; and with the idea that if the musician was a woman, he might, if discovered, interrupt her song, he carefully concealed himself under the wall, and awaited the cheerful sounds.

Again the guitar was struck, and the musician's ear detected some slight discordance, which was soon attuned to harmony ; and after again and again striking the chords, producing as much sound as could be emitted from so miserable an instrument, a man's voice was heard, in a hurried tone of recitative, as he pronounced the following :—

“ Some councils frequently are sung,
In every language, like a tongue
Just fresh escaped from Babel ;

Some send a hint in quiet prose ;
Some speak right out—but there are those
Who cloak it in a fable."

Here the musician again struck the chords. Vratz carefully retreated to where he could see the window, and at that moment he discovered a female form; her pale face was turned towards the moon, and her head rested on her left hand. It was impossible to discern the features, and Vratz again, afraid of discovery, retreated to the wall, but nearer to that angle from which the voice appeared to come.

"Not long ago, a little bird,
The sweetest warbler ever heard,
Was in a cage confined ;
The bird was caught in foreign land,
And captured by the stranger's hand,
From parents loved and kind.

"In early life this bird would sing,
As oft it flew on freedom's wing,
In most melodious strain.
Imprison'd, now it charm'd the throng
With some soft melancholy song,
Descriptive of its pain."

Here the voice ceased, and a low "Hist—hist!" was heard; it seemed to awake the attention of her to whom it was directed. The guitar again gave forth its notes, and the song continued:—

"She had no mate to charm her ear,
No constant friend, for ever near,
To soothe her in her grief;
No heart, when anguish rack'd her brain,
To share her woes—to soothe her pain,
Or give that heart relief."

"Go, go," said a voice, from another window; "good man, you should be asleep; this is no time to disturb people by such horrid monotonous nonsense. By the mass! it is as dull as the chant of the Psalms; I would rather hear the varied song of the thrush, than the sameness of the nightingale's notes." Here the coughing of old lungs was heard, and a window was suddenly closed. Vratz looked up—the female form was there, leaning over, as if to watch the safe housing of the old crone. Again the fable was continued:—

“ But there was one who saw the prize,
And watch'd it with a lover's eyes,
Imprison'd, or abroad.
He knew the window where this bird,
To sing its choicest song was heard;
He listen'd—he adored.

“ He cared not where he lived, if she
Would in that clime contented be,
If it were France or Greece;
Or where the Rhine still rolls its flood,
Or in Calabria's shaded wood,
His hope was her release.”

Vratz looked round the corner, but he saw only a Maltese, and he of the lower order; his dress bespoke considerable poverty, and he appeared to stand as if one leg had received an injury. He was immediately voted by the charitable Vratz, as a poor devil, who was endeavouring to earn a supper. Not so the lady; the reference to Greece and Calabria had awakened her greatest attention, and her attitude bespoke her interest. The singer seemed to have perceived this, and he continued, with warmth and feeling :—

“His pinions strong, his courage proof,
He sigh'd to bear the bird aloof
From slavery and from toil—
To dart at once on freedom's air,
And take the bird from cage and care,
To his own cherish'd soil.

“That constant bird still hovers nigh,
To warn the captive when to fly,
And stands prepared to roam.
He'd bear her to another shore,
To taste contentment's ample store,
And find a happier home.”

Each word was pronounced so that the most careless ear could catch the meaning; and as a proof that the recitation was intentional, the singer again repeated the last verse, but in a soft, soothing Italian air, to which the words had evidently been arranged. Again the “Hist! hist!” was heard, and the singer knocked gently at the garden gate; the female form had left the window, and the one from which the old woman had spoken, and which opened into the garden, was again heard to move.

“I tell you, *no*,” said a sweet voice;

“ the night is too cold for you ; I will reward the poor man.”

“ Reward, by the mass !—reward, for croaking like a hoarse raven, and disturbing honest people during their evening’s prayer. I had to begin five times, for I lost my memory whenever that jingling guitar struck upon my ear.”

“ I will tell him to begone, good mother, and then you can resume your prayers.”

“ Quickly, then, for the air is cold ; do not go outside of the gate, and, remember, I can see.”

With a trembling hand, Isabella unfastened the door. No sooner was it opened, than a note was placed in her hand, and a voice, which struck sweetly on her ear, said, “ Read that ; to-morrow at dusk I will be here ; endeavour to persuade the old hag to let me in ;” then aloud, and in a coarse voice, he added, “ ’tis very little, but I am very poor ; my thanks to you, fair lady.”

“ Come in, come in !” said the old woman.

"Konigsmark!" said Isabella.

"Remember the fable, Isabella." Here the old lady was heard pattering along the walk; the door was closed, and the letter concealed in a sanctuary where a secret should ever repose.

As Konigsmark turned the angle of the wall, he saw Vratz, and recognised him. Instantly the former assumed a limp, and felt assured that even his own retainer would never discover him in his Maltese garb.

"It's well for you, old gentleman," said Vratz, "that you can make money out of that old jingling instrument, and by singing to no tune at all. A pack of nonsense about birds and cages! By St. Francisco! I might sing my lungs out, and no one would give me a piastre."

"It is not for the song, but for charity's sake, that old lady rewarded me."

"Old!—by the mass! why her voice struck me as sweet as the nightingale note."

"Between her coughs," replied Konigsmark, "her voice is better."

"Do you take me, you old booby," said Vratz, "to be so deaf, that I cannot distinguish two voices from one? Why, I heard the young one ask the old one to let her pay, on account of the night air."

"To one so old, and deaf, and blind, as I am, it matters little if the giver of charity is young or old."

"You old fellows," answered Vratz, "seem to smell beauty as dogs do game. 'My thanks to you, *fair lady*,' did not seem like the words of one either old, deaf, or blind."

"'Tis our habitude; we call all who give, young and fair. It's marvellous how blind the world is, when they receive money from any hand—and no one likes to be called old, although she may have reached eighty."

"So that your trade may be called, a little stock of music—a vast account of old songs, and a huge mass of lies and compliments."

"Ay," said Konigsmark, gravely, "and many have made a fortune with a less stock in trade; it's the staple commodity all over the

world, and when well used is generally successful."

"Why, you walk better than you did," remarked Vratz.

"Even so," returned Konigsmark, coolly; "it is only the first step or two that's painful. Like a foundered horse—when I get warm I recover my usual footing."

"And who lives in that house, where you have been caterwauling for the last half hour?"

"An elderly lady, who retired from the noise of Valetta when the Turkish fleet were off the island. Although she continually finds fault with my songs, she is in general charitably disposed, and when the guitar fails, I ask in another voice, and she seldom refuses. I have not been there before for a week, and she sent me less than usual."

"Well, but who is the young lady—the fair lady?"

"I only know one person there, and if there was a second, I can safely say I never

saw her before in my life. It is getting late, and we must quicken our pace, or the gate will be shut. We have not a lantern, and after the hour of ten, we are liable to be imprisoned for this neglect."

"Then with your permission, old gentleman, I will quicken my pace. If I could make money as easily as you do, I should share it with my comrades."

"And so should I, if my comrades were as poor as myself. A good night to you, noble sir; you are above want; your high bearing and your manly appearance marks the distinguished amongst men, and if I crave your charity, it is because I must pay for my supper before I lie down to sleep."

Vratz, vain of these compliments, overcame his disposition to withhold his charity, and to the very man to whom he had hinted a participation of profits, he gave half a piastre.

"I'll mark it with a cross," said Konigsmark, "and before you die you shall have it

again. Good night, and many thanks, young noble gentleman."

Vratz walked hurriedly on; Konigsmark leant against the wall, and gave way to an immoderate fit of laughter; then, throwing off the outer garment, in which he wrapped the guitar, he walked by unnoticed. Quickening his pace, he arrived at the hostelry before Vratz, and concealing his disguise, came forth to talk over his departure.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN Konigsmark left Malta for Alexandria, it has been mentioned that he left the fair Isabella in charge of a respectable woman. There are few terms more frequently misapplied than that of respectable, and in this case it was a misnomer.

No sooner had Konigsmark left the island, than the old lady was induced, for some of the universal seducer, money, to admit an elderly gentleman to admire her charge. To Isabella his visits were most painful; she saw in a

moment his advances, and repulsed them as quickly. Her heart beat but for one person, and that one person was Konigsmark. Indeed, if we consult the historian of the Swedish adventurer's life, Isabella's was not a singular case—he was a great favourite with the sex. To a fair proportion of beauty, a fine manly form, and courage which no danger could appal, he added those many trifling accomplishments which win the female heart. He related anecdotes admirably; he sang, he played, he surmounted all difficulties; his name was in every mouth; he was the friend of princes and the protected of kings; besides which, he had a reputation for intrigue, and the learned masters of that art were studied with great attention by him, whose earthly paradise consisted of women, wealth, war, and wine. His temper was never ruffled; young as he was, he could control passion, and bide his time. A more complete personification of the celebrated Don Giovanni never trod life's stage.

With those whose temperament was chilly, Konigsmark dallied with his hopes, and by degrees warmed them into ruin; with those of sparkling eyes and raven hair, he was suddenly impassioned and earnestly vehement. The large blue eye was won by song and poetry; and whilst with some he appeared romantic, with others he was reserved, silent, melancholy, and studious. Had Konigsmark written an "Art of Love," Ovid and Catullus would have rotted on forgotten shelves.

Isabella's cold, distant manner to the man who had paid for the privilege of her society astonished and affronted the respectable lady, who not knowing at what moment Konigsmark would return, made over her charge to the old woman at Florian, whose garden wall was high enough to defy a lover's leap, for without a ladder she never could get to the top of it. Here, too, fearing to meet the man whose advances she dreaded, she was content to remain in seclusion; her heart beat only for

Konigsmark; but in her hope of once more seeing him, she equally dreaded the appearance of Vratz, who, to call ungainly, was a compliment to decided ugliness.

With a palpitating heart and flushed cheek, she endeavoured to seek her own chamber, and there dwell on the contents of the note. The song had conveyed the singer's intention clearly enough; but to see those intentions written in the handwriting of one we love; to read and re-read the letters; to scan, with scrupulous exactness, every sentence; to endeavour to turn them into the meaning we most desire they should express,—these are amongst the high gratifications of love, and these she was destined to forego for a time.

“Come, child,” said the old woman, “read me my prayers, for I am growing very blind. Why, child, how pale you are! Are you ill?”

“Somewhat indisposed, good madam; I pray you to let me retire to my room.”

The old lady eyed her with suspicion—a

doubt hung upon the expression of the countenance, which a child might have read. "What has happened?" she continued. "Ay, that singer was a lover, or the conveyer of a note. Come hither, girl. What is this?"

"Nothing, good madam; it is but a song I once heard sung in Greece."

"And this?" continued the old woman, as she produced another piece of paper.

"The list of fruit you bought yesterday."

"There is something unusual in your manner—kneel down and read me my prayers."

Isabella did as she was desired, and was then told to retire to her chamber; but the old lady accompanied her, closed the window, which fastened with a lock, the key of which, and also that of the door, she took with her, muttering, as she retraced her steps—"A plague on all girls; from the time they are fourteen until they are buried, no one can read their hearts or tell their disposition. I would I had my reward, and she married."

But an instant elapsed before the letter, which increased the palpitation of the heart over which it had rested, was brought forth and read with all the hurried impatience of love, when the eyes seem to skim the whole writing at a glance, and comprehend as by magic the writer's meaning. It was thus: "Dearest, best beloved Isabella.—I am returned, and you are again a captive. I cannot claim you, because I have no right to enforce that claim, neither do I know if it is with your own consent, or not, that you thus remain in seclusion. In the many hours we have spent together, you, I feel, have read my heart; in your eyes I saw that Vratz was not favoured in his love. If the heart of Isabella is true to him by whose means she was rescued from slavery, and from being the creature of a savage despot's will, that heart will find one which beats responsive to its throb, in the breast of her Konigsmark." She heard the key cautiously being inserted in the lock, and

forcing the note into her slipper, stood the emblem of innocence startled at the violation of her bed-room door. It was her gaoler, who, dissatisfied with her former search, now began one with more rigour; nay, the very place where the letter had been was examined, every part of her dress underwent a scrutiny, and the suspected contrabandiste at a custom-house never was more rigidly visited. Still the slipper was untouched; and although the pillow was removed—for there affection often sleeps on words of love—not a corner was unnoticed; all the cosmetics of a lady's dressing-table, the hated objects sent by the man who sought to purchase that which was in silence given to another, were removed and examined.

"It came across me like the warning of fate," muttered the old woman, "and I feel I am deceived. What song did that scraper of an unholy instrument sing, Miss Innocence?"

"It was, I think, the merry verses of that

song which was written to commemorate the battle in which I was rescued."

"And where is your hero of a deliverer now?"

"Who can tell?" said Isabella, with a sigh.

"Who can say if the ship has escaped the dangers of the sea—the surges on the shore. I owe him much, good madam, which this poor heart never can repay."

"And what do you owe the kind man who, when your chivalrous knight left you here unprotected, gave you this house for a home, and furnished the thousand comforts which surround you? To-morrow—to-morrow will, I hope, see you a bride; and, by the mass! I shall be happier when so beautiful a charge is made a rich man's wife. What is in this book?"

"'Tis only the leaf of a rose. You imagine, good lady, that my lover, whoever he may be, sends his impassioned sentiments in the mute language of flowers."

"Go, go to bed, and talk not to me of lovers and flowers."

“When you retire, good madam, I have then no other solace left but my pillow.”

“And as I like to see young people happy, I will stay and see how pretty you look on your only solace.”

Isabella never hesitated a second, but soon laid her flushed and beautiful cheek on the pillow—the emblem of love and innocence.

“Good night, child,” said the old woman, and leaning over to kiss her charge, she once again passed her hand under the pillow, then blowing out the light, fastened the door and retired. Isabella lay still and breathless until the old crone had descended the stairs; then she kissed the letter again and again; and laying it next her heart, slept in the enraptured dream of love. At dawn of day, the letter was torn from its sanctuary, and read and kissed again. She thought she heard the shouts which welcomed Konigsmark after the action, and caught the bold daring of his eye, as he defended her from the meditated assault

of Vratz; she remembered every word he had ever uttered to her, and the soft look which told that even the warrior's heart could quail when a woman's glance was directed towards him; she felt, she knew she loved him. And now he was returned, what danger had she to fear? He was her impersonation of valour and chivalry; and when the heart once entertains such impressions, what power can eradicate them?

Her first meeting with her jailer was not, as usual, alone, and at breakfast; but there was the hated figure of the old man, who, struck with the gayness of her appearance and the liveliness of her manner, could not restrain his eagerness. She recoiled from his touch as from a viper, and drawing up herself apparently above her usual height, she said—

“I never heard, sir, that I am destined by the lady to be your bride this day. I am not so inclined; and to save you much trouble and prevent such early rising, which must be prejudicial to your health, and deprive your limbs.

of their much required repose, I tell you, your bride I will never be; that I claim my liberation from this unjustifiable incarceration, or you shall be responsible for my detention."

"By my beads, the child speaks boldly," interrupted the old woman; "but the walls are high, and the priest is near. Come, sit down to your breakfast; after which, we shall have no trouble in this union."

"We have as warm blood in Calabria as you have in this island," said Isabella, coolly; "and I have little fear of insult from one so old as that man, which I cannot revenge. I can bear even to eat with you, and laugh at him."

"One would think she were a princess," said the old lady. "By the mass! she looks ten times more lovely when animated, and it's marvellous how one who was the favourite of a Turk, and more than half a heretic from the connexion, can assume such innocence. I would not have her touch my beads for half the

wealth of Constantinople! Why, child, you are an idiot! What have you in this world but your beauty to recommend you, and who but this worthy man would wed the rescued mistress of a heathen? What have you, I say, but your beauty?"

"I have a heart which I will give with my hand; and as I destine neither for him, he may save himself the expense of the bridal dress, and the present to the priest."

The old woman wagged her wizened face, as she said—"Birds with clipped wings find it difficult to fly; and when the holy father comes, there will be an obedience to his words. Besides, things are done by force here; and the knights are too busy to trouble themselves about one of the harem of a Turk."

Innocence defies slander. The blood which rushed to the young beauty's face was not occasioned by shame, but it was an effect of the heart, to show on the cheeks how ready it was to resent an insult. Isabella mastered her

feelings. In the meantime, the old man, who felt the last tingle of desire, became warm in his praise of her courage and noble bearing; he paid compliments upon compliments, which were perfectly unheeded by Isabella, who, without making the slightest acknowledgment, directly she had finished her miserable repast, rose from the table, and rushing to her window, endeavoured to open it and breathe freely: in this she was foiled; but she could see coming over the high ground, where Vratz had last night taken up his situation, the portly figure of a priest, dressed in all the insignia of his holy profession, approaching the house. Her heart misgave her for a moment, but she soon recovered her courage. She watched his step, and before long heard the sound of the bell, and saw the old woman hasten her speed, and bow reverently as she saluted the pious man.

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COUNT KÖNIGSMARK:

An Historical Romance.

BY

CAPTAIN CHAMIER, R.N.

AUTHOR OF

"THE LIFE OF A SAILOR," "BEN BRACE," "JACK ADAMS,"

ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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COUNT KÖNIGSMARK.

CHAPTER I.

"It must be done to-day," said the old crone. "The bag of dollars awaits your hand; and it is a pious and a good work to turn the heart of the heretic to salvation by Christianity. Come, good father, we will talk of this in my room; there is yet a flask of Cyprus and a fig of Smyrna. The old gentleman is ready. By the mass! he is a bold man to marry him with that young tigress, whose eye lights up like a torch, and seems to burn the cheek which is near it."

"Women and wine," chuckled the fat priest, "are forbidden to our holy order; but to fly from them is cowardice. We show our firmness the better by facing

temptation, and then overcoming it. Ay, Signora Francesca, we are now arrived at an age when such fascinations may be resisted."

"Then, reverend padre," replied the lady, with a smile, "it is age which will conquer inclination."

In the room sat the wizened man destined for the husband of Isabella; his hair was white with age, and his face was wrinkled with years; he was thin, sharp-featured, with small eyes, yet glimmering with the last spark of desire. He was one of those men who will make any sacrifice to gratify their inclinations. His eye had fallen on Isabella—her beauty had overcome all other considerations, and he was ready to expend any amount of money—for his wealth was great—to obtain this prize.

The Signora Francesca had been called the *niece* of the priest, in years past; her desire of gold soon led the old man to select her as the best person to forward his end; and she, in her turn, knowing that all the religion of *her uncle* consisted in his dress—that he was one of those who wore a dif-

ferent face for every different person—whose days of fasting and prayer in public were hours of guzzling and gormandizing in private—whose pocket was never full, but whose cupidity was equal to his necessities, fixed upon him to forward her views.

Padre Tomaso had turned the world to some account; to him, the penitent might apply with confidence; the confession was heard with attention, and the chink of money was the herald of absolution. He was well known in Valetta as the most discreet man on the island; the secrets committed to him were buried in his heart; and, even when flushed beyond his general rubicund appearance, the tongue seemed the sentinel of the heart, and with prudent and guarded silence watched over the portal of the sacred deposits. Tomaso had been a warrior, and when younger, would have been a fearful antagonist in any encounter; now he preached peace, and acted it; the world's tornado of excitement rushed by him innocently. He still loved a glass of rich Cyprus, and the quiet of his evening's repose

was no longer disturbed by the sweet voices of the other sex ; his whole soul was centered in money ; laying up a store which would secure him an old age of comfort and of indolence ; and, be it said with all reverence for his sacred calling, he might have painted over his door, " Any desperate deed done here, with caution and discretion, at a reasonable price."

" It's a difficult business this, Signora," said Tomaso, " to marry a woman without her consent, and might produce a great scandal. It is true, my word that she did consent would hush any storm which an unprotected heretic might raise ; but then it is against our law to unite a heathen with a Christian."

" Pooh ! pooh ! Padre," said the Signora ; " the girl's as much a Christian as you are ; was born within the Holy Roman Empire, and has been blessed by the Pope himself ; but she has no father, mother, sister, brother, or any relation, or friend alive, excepting a Swede, who, if the sea get its due, is now at the bottom of it. There are imaginary dan-

gers and difficulties which may be overcome by a certain sum given for the church's benefit, to be disposed of by the good Padre Tomaso."

"'Tis true, Signora, very true ; but for these acts the church is exorbitant."

"For such a treasure," said the old man, "much may be given. I have here a bag with various gold coin therein ; it would buy much of the world's prayers or the world's comforts."

"Has she been confessed?" asked Tomaso.

"By the mass, *no* ! Who is to do that, but the most excellent man before us ?"

"It is an ordinance strictly enjoined by the church before marriage, and I must learn from her own lips that she is a good catholic. That done, the task will be easier. Where is she ?"

"In her room," replied the Signora.

"Then, with your permission, I will endeavour to ease her mind, by granting that absolution which I hope her life of innocence, faith, hope, and charity, may warrant. It is

a good work for all Christians to confess and lay down the load of sin they carry about them, to their destruction."

He made a low bow and passed through a small door, and showed how intimately acquainted he was with the locality by not asking for any guide to Isabella's room.

"A pious and a good man," said the old gentleman.

"A worthy and excellent Christian," said the Signora. "He has confessed me these fifty years, and never refused me absolution once."

"A few Ave Marias and some of *this*," said the bridegroom, touching the bag.

"Yes, yes," said the old lady; "the more sacred the character, the more reason why we sinners should contribute to its worldly comfort; and ten Aves, repeated with fervour and attention, are better than a hundred gabbled over with indecent haste."

The mind of Isabella was susceptible of every religious impression, and her fear of those who administered the offices of the church was superstitiously evident. She

knew it was the holy father's privilege to enter any room, and no bar or bolt remained a safeguard against his desire to enter. Neither did Isabella dare refuse admittance ; but, bowing reverently to the holy father as he passed, she craved his blessing, and then closed the door.

“ Your guardian and protector, the worthy Signora below, has told me that you have long neglected your confession, and that you stand in need of the church's blessing. You are not reproved, good daughter, for this omission, as I understand you had not the power to act in accordance with your holy desire. It shall be my duty to absolve you from your sins, if such—and the best have some—are not beyond my power.” The holy man seated himself in an arm chair, whilst Isabella, really grateful for the opportunity thus afforded her, knelt down and poured out the secrets of her heart.

It is marvellous the frivolous nonsense poured into the priest's ears by the young and the innocent. What can they tell but of some trifling omission, some neglect of

study, some trivial forgetfulness, unworthy of being considered a sin ; and if declared to be such, paving the way to the commission of greater ones, by the familiarity attached to the word ? Isabella had never omitted her prayers ; but she confessed she had sometimes wandered in the repetition of them. Her hours were never hours of idleness. Her books were those on religion, and her thoughts were as innocent as a child's. Grateful to her deliverer, she blessed even the name of Vratz ; and still more grateful to the hero who had a second time rescued her, she owned a deep attachment, founded on gratitude and esteem. She was thankful even to the old man who had provided for her the present retreat, when the money left by Konigsmark was declared to be all expended. Her heart was laid bare ; there was not a spot upon it. She was artless, sinless ; and even Tomaso could not lay a sin to her charge, saving those wandering thoughts which were better controlled, and which marred the efficacy of her prayers.

“ You have mentioned nothing of your

affections," said the priest. "They are, of course, fixed upon the man to whom you are about to be united."

"I am in no ways so engaged," answered Isabella.

"The Signora has mentioned your attachment to the worthy man below, who even now awaits but the absolution which it is my duty to give to one so good, to be united in marriage with you; nay, I was sent for to perform the ceremony; and, pleased to find that gratitude in your heart had magnified itself into love for your benefactor, I hastened here, I was given to understand, at your desire."

"That I am grateful for every kindness, Heaven is my judge, and my confession of it my greatest pleasure; but I would rather wander the world over, begging my bread, and saving enough from the charity of the stranger to repay what I have cost, than I would give my hand where my heart did not dictate. I am now under an additional obligation to you for listening to this avowal. I shall have one holy witness to attest my

abhorrence of such an act, and also that, happen what may, my consent to this union shall never be obtained. I know, I feel, I am a prisoner ; but my heart is free, and never shall be enslaved."

Padre Tomaso could not but admire the girl ; but he was the paid advocate of the other party. He now painted in vivid colours the advantages which would accrue to Isabella from the match. The man was rich, old, and infirm ; a quicker death might be the result of the union ; his money would then come to her, and she would be free and independent for ever. Then she might select her husband.

"True, father, very true, that all these benefits might arise ; but I loath, abhor, detest, the old decrepit remnant of a man ; nor would I, for the wealth of the sultan, or his power—and power is a woman's strongest wish—yield up my independence—if such an unfortunate being as myself can be independent—and surrender these poor charms to such a wizened dotard."

"This world has many charms for those

who, unlike us, do not spend their hours in prayer, their nights in austerities, their days in fasting." The learned padre certainly bore out the mistaken notion, that fasting is a "windy recreation," for certainly he was blown up till he was as round as a ball. "We know not of life's pleasures, we only know of the world's wickedness. It is poverty which leads to sin ; and, through the confession of the sinner, we become acquainted with crime. We toil here for salvation ; our lives resemble the traveller to some distant land, which, when gained, becomes his home. Our nights and days are like the resting-places he seeks in his journey ; our end is there,"—and he pointed to heaven. "But your life is far, far different : the world's frivolities of fashion and of dress constitute your work by day and your dream by night ; your beauty and your charms might make a king your slave ; but remember, you were rescued from a Turk's harem. We only know the fact ; and your assertion as to your innocence weighs but lightly in this age of incredulity. As far as

that which constitutes the maiden's pride, it is but in the estimation of the world ; and although, inwardly, your conscience and your innocence may give you the eye and the bearing of modesty, still the world—for that is always censorious—will never credit the fact that one so beautiful, and the favoured one of the admiral's harem, escaped his embrace. Money may silence what virtue cannot control. Once wedded to the man below, your name and your residence changed, you will go forth, not as one rescued from a Turk, but as the wife of a Christian."

Isabella breathed heavily, and sighed deeply. She dared not affront the holy father, nor could she escape from his remarks. She rose and advanced to the window, in order to obtain some air ; it was locked : but that which enclosed her body could not limit her sight—not a yard from the angle of the wall was Konigsmark. He seemed endeavouring to throw a small stone, to which was attached a string, to the top of it ; and in his eagerness to effect his

object, did not see her who now courted his view. She was afraid to make any sign, lest she should attract the notice of the priest, and he was much too lazy to rise from his chair to gaze from the window. Isabella saw that Konigsmark had effected his object, and she instantly understood his aim. She implored the priest to use his power to have the lattice opened, and some air admitted ; and in obedience to his call, the Signora appeared. The padre, with unmoved countenance, said—" She has consented. Call up the bridegroom."

" It were better she came down, good father."

Isabella kept her eyes fixed upon the retreating figure of Konigsmark ; and to the Signora's question—" Is it true, Isabella ?—do you wish it ?" she answered, " Oh, yes ; and quickly," believing the question to have reference to the window. The old woman instantly descended, to give the cheerful tidings to the poor wretch below ; and the padre, obtaining the key from her, unlocked the window, and allowed the cool air to fan

the flushed cheek of the innocent girl. She saw Konigsmark's rapid stride towards the gate of the town. As he gained the hill, he turned to look, and unconsciously she moved her hand—he saw it, and answered it.

CHAPTER II.

THE Signora was a great friend to the saints. In a corner of the room there was a small triangle, mounted on a pedestal, and on one of the bars, which were placed horizontally from the base to the point, projected small nails. To these, as occasion required, were affixed wax tapers, long and thin ; some burnt to St. Francisco, some to St. Giovanni, the patron saint of Malta, whose name is bestowed on the celebrated cathedral in Valetta. The Virgin had, almost daily, a candle burnt to her honour, for she had been grievously offended, and it must be averred that not a saint in the calendar was altogether overlooked ; it was an easy way

of reconciling differences, and as the lady had heard, so she acted, "that it was right to hold a candle to all the saints."

On a small table lay a crucifix; on each side of it were placed very high candles; on the right of the priest stood the old man, and by his side was the Signora. The padre had changed his garments, and wore some of those used at marriages in churches.

The Signora called to Isabella, and desired her to come down to prayers, as the pious father was about to bless the house and its inmates after the confessions. Isabella knew very little of the service, and had never seen a marriage in her life, but she had a holy reverence, the superstition of uneducated minds, for any who performed the service of the church, and the preparations therefore which met her eye did not for a second excite her suspicion. On her entering, the padre said, "Are you willing we should proceed?" Isabella bowed reverently, crossed herself devotedly, and answered with a meek, trembling voice, "I am, and am thankful for this blessing." The old man's eye

twinkled and kindled into animation, whilst the priest, desiring Isabella to stand on his left, began with wonderful volubility, and in the Latin, to which Isabella was a perfect stranger—"Deus Abraham, Deus Isaac, et Deus Jacob, vobiscum sit, et ipse conjugat vos, impleatque benedictionem suam in vobis." Isabella continued repeating in Italian the very little she knew, whilst the priest continued, on quite a different subject, "Filii sanctorum sumus; non possumus ità conjungi sicut gentes quæ ignorant Deum. Honorabile connubium in omnibus, et thorus immaculatus." At this very interesting point, and to which the priest had arrived in an incredibly short time, he was stopped by a violent ringing at the gate. The old man begged him to proceed, and not regard the interruption; but both the Signora and the priest, well aware of the dangerous experiment they were performing, hesitated and stopped; whilst Isabella, on her knees, was continuing the repetition of divers Ave Marias, in Latin, the interpretation of which she did not exactly comprehend.

The ringing was soon superseded by divers knockings, and it was evident the person so unceremoniously disturbing the marriage was either one in a great hurry, or one in great authority.

“What right has any one to thunder at our doors?” said the old man, bristling up into animation. “Are not our thresholds sacred from entrance? or are we slaves, as of old, when he who governed entered without permission? Proceed, reverend father; you can at least join our hands, without which, my purse remains in my own keeping.” Isabella’s mind was fixed upon her prayers; she still continued on her knees, when the Signora, calling her by name, bade her go and open the gate. The padre and the old man both seemed opposed to this; but the Signora being resolute, Isabella was sent.

No sooner had she obeyed the order, which she did with a good-will—for this was her prison gate—than a young man, followed by three others, entered. The first speaker said, “they were desired to search the house,

for the person of a prisoner, who having escaped from the jail, had been traced to this house."

In vain the Signora, on hearing this, protested against any such search ; in vain the holy father pledged his word, or the old man supplicated the intruders to depart ; the answer was, " they were desired to search the premises ; here was the order, and search them they should, taking care that no communication between the escaped ruffian and the household could possibly be held." In order to effect this, the room devoted to the service of the church was first searched ; and as a precautionary measure, the padre, the Signora, and the old man, were locked in, whilst Isabella, whom they affected to believe a servant, was desired to procure the keys, and open all the doors.

In vain the padre desired to be released, and asserted that he had to shrive a departing soul ; and equally in vain the Signora volunteered to show every hole and cranny in the house. The first was informed that he would be free in a moment, and the second,

that the servant was younger, and consequently quicker than she was. The old man only begged the priest to be quiet, that, the search over, they could finish the work, so inauspiciously begun, and the purse change owners. Indeed, it was not long before the whole four returned, one stating that they were satisfied, and all passing through the room, and out of the gate by which they had entered. The locking of doors in the house was distinctly heard, and the old man remarked, how careful his bride had been brought up, and what care she took of the Signora's property.

Recovered somewhat from the annoyance of this intrusion, the old man proposed to continue the service, at the same time showing the purse, and exciting the covetousness of the priest. The Signora, equally anxious to finish the business, called for Isabella, who, it appeared, had retreated to her own room. No answer was given, until after several repetitions, when a reply was heard—"In a minute." The minute was an hour in the old man's estimation, but not more

than a quarter in the priest's, when the foot-steps of some one descending the stairs awoke palpitations in the lover's heart. Each party took up his former situation, and on Isabella being ordered to be more diligent, and come quickly, the door opened, and presented, to the astonishment of all, the stalwart figure of Vratz, dressed up, as well as he could be dressed, as a woman; and had not fright taken entire possession of the party, it would have been impossible to have resisted laughter. Vratz had had but little time, and still less experience, to transform himself. Having seen that the whole household consisted of a fat priest, an old, impotent man, and a chattering woman, he felt he might indulge in one of his own frolics, and disobey the orders of Konigsmark, who had provided for his retreat by a rope with a hook at the end, which would have reached from the window to the garden, and would then have served to convey him over the wall.

Every article of female ornament found in Isabella's room he had managed to fasten on

his person ; large daggers ran through his hair ; ear-rings, those abominations, those remnants of barbarism, made to disfigure the beautiful ear, and to make the long mis-shapen ear longer and more mis-shapen, he had contrived to suspend from his, by means of pieces of thread, which passed over his ears ; he had a black rosary, with a huge cross, and now not such a one, "as Jews might kiss, and infidels adore." He had somehow jumped into two dresses, or rather, tied one over the other, so that his back was a fine green colour, whilst his front was a chaste white, leaving his feet at a very inconvenient distance from the hem of his garments. Over his shoulder, and as mutes at burials wear their scarfs, he had thrown a shawl, which he tied in a knot ; and screwing up his mouth into the most insinuating of all distortions, he, in a subdued, and mimic feminine voice, as much like to the one he attempted to imitate as the roar of the lion to the faint bleat of the lamb, said, with a curtsy—" Pray, reverend father, continue

the ceremony : I am quite ready to be my grandfather's bride."

The good-humoured father could not restrain his laughter, and sat on his chair, convulsed, his fat bloated cheeks growing redder and redder, whilst the tears started from his eyes. He held his hands over his vast protuberance of a stomach, holding his sides, and shaking with mirth.

The Signora screamed and shouted, whilst the old man, who could not withdraw his eyes from the fantastic figure before him, shook his wizened hands, and uttered,—
"No ! no !"

"Well," said Vratz, "if you wont have me for a bride, you will perhaps enjoy me as a companion. "Here," said he ; "look here !" and in a manner somewhat calculated to shock the modesty of the beholders, he pulled from under his dress two bottles of wine, which he had filched from the cellar, and had swung round his waist. "Come, father," said he, "let's have the feast, if we don't have the marriage. My

husband there, old spindle-shanks, will be the better for this cordial, and you, reverend padre, none the worse for it. All nieces of the priesthood know what the holy fathers like." Here Vratz, using the privileges of the sex he assumed, looked with a winning leer at the priest.

"Who are you?—what are you?" said the Signora, having by this time recovered her courage, and felt the insult in reference to the niece of the padre.

"At present," said Vratz, with the most provoking coolness, "a woman in dress, but a man in body; one ready to marry old spindle directly, for his money, or to unite myself until its exenteration, to this bottle; a merry fellow in all things, much given to adventure; a Swede by birth, a vagabond by parentage, a free man by valour, and the friend and companion, although once the slave and retainer, of Count Konigsmark. Moreover, be it known, reverend father, that I saved the lovely Isabella from the dominion of the Grand Turk, and have now rescued her from the still more objectionable

union with the old gentleman in the corner. So having given you my birth, parentage, and education, allow me to drink your very good healths, and the prosperity of the fair and beautiful girl now removed from your clutches."

Here, having drawn the cork, he placed the bottle to his lips, and emptied it at a draught. "Good, very good, by the Prophet! as those fellows say at Alexandria. Pardon me, your reverence, I will just see if this is of the same sort, and worthy of your pious lips;" and suiting the action to the word, he gave the priest the second bottle, half-emptied; then turning to the Signora, he said, "with your permission, I will carry the young lady's wardrobe to her house."

"And I will carry my complaint to where it will be listened to with respect," said the Signora.

"Then it will be elsewhere," said Vratz. "With your permission, reverend father," and taking the bottle from the priest, he drained it in a second, and began instantly to divest himself of his female apparel, which he

bundled up most irreverently, into a handkerchief. Then saying, "I will make free to open that door," he saluted the company with much gravity, and departed.

"A merry wight, by the mass!" said the priest.

"A vulgar ruffian!" said the old man.

"An unblushing thief!" said the Signora.

"Pray continue," said Vratz, looking back; "I pray you, on no account, be too fulsome in my praise; it is the privilege of old women, of both sexes, to shake their palsied limbs, and be censorious. Take care of your uncle, dear madam; and I hope all his children will be as beautiful as the mother. Shall I send a mule to carry you home, old spindle-shanks? Farewell, good people; and if you continue your prayers, remember Vratz, the Swede."

"And remember the curse of an injured woman," said the Signora, "that accompanies you, and ruins you, when prosperity appears the nearest. The hemp is grown and the rope is made which shall dangle your ugly body in the breeze;" and as she

crossed herself with much reverence, she said—"And so be His will, and my curse fulfilled." "

Vratz spat over his left shoulder, called out, "A witch! a witch!" and taking to his heels, ran down to the port, to embark on board the *Bella Ragazza*; but to his dismay he saw her outside of Valetta, and with a fair and steady breeze standing over towards the Pharo of Messina. That Konigsmark had broken his promise, and eloped with the girl he loved, was his first thought. He returned to the hostelry; Konigsmark's effects were removed, but on opening his own valise, he found a note, saying, "You have delayed too long, and all might be lost. Follow me to Naples. I have left money enough for all things. Isabella urges me to depart." Vratz thought of the curse of the Signora, and felt that when prosperity appeared the nearest, already it was farthest off.

CHAPTER III.

FRESH blew the breeze and fair, which wafted the Bella Ragazza, a small felucca, towards her destination. The high land of Mount Etna was visible ; and in the event of a change in the weather, the little vessel would soon have numerous ports to which she could run for shelter from the storm.

That Isabella loved her rescuer there was little doubt ; for she had yielded to his request to fly even to the uttermost quarters of the earth, directly the impassioned voice of Konigsmark had urged her to leave her unpleasant abode. Isabella *trusted* in him. She was little aware how licentious was the general character of the age—how lightly

virtue was esteemed at a profligate court—how the power and the patronage of a kingdom was influenced by the mistress of a sovereign. As yet, secure in her innocence, she believed the man who was beside her as the impersonation of all honour. She listened to his recital of adventures. Ah ! that is a sure road to a woman's heart. His eyes glistened as he recounted the magician's wonders ; and as his cheek flushed, and a general animation covered his face, he drew vivid descriptions of the scenery of the East, and called forth her wonder and astonishment as he pictured to her the varied emotions of his heart.

In drawing the fresh sketch of Cairo; the pyramids, and wide-flowing Nile, she listened, and the hours flew. Her eyes met his, and suddenly abashed, were averted ; whilst the blush of detection suffused his cheeks, and hers were as suddenly red ; and then, as if ashamed of the silent confession, she chased away the colour, and became immediately pale.

Meantime, the conversation varied in its

subject, and Isabella confessed how pleased she was that Vratz was left behind, although somewhat indebted to him ; for she had become his prize. Yet she knew it was alone the discovery of the gold which saved her innocence. The savage was in his eyes, when the avaricious disposition of the man mastered the appetite : in her heart she hated, she despised him. And why ? Those who best know the human heart need not the explanation, and those who are ignorant, had better not be enlightened. Place it in any light—say her pride was hurt—that gold could be superior to her charms—but she hated and dreaded him ; and it was this dread that made her partially consent to inhabit the prison from which Vratz had emancipated her, but from which she had consented to fly, from the words of Konigsmark's song. With him she would roam the world ; and, uneducated in all the sterner moralities of life, saw no sin in love, but felt its powerful influence. The first man who had ever engaged her heart—the bold, daring hero—now sat by her side ; and, as he re-

counted his anecdotes, held her hand in his. There was a tremulous motion, which betrayed her feelings, there was a soft moisture in the eye, which told the secret of her heart. She had entrusted herself on the great ocean to the care alone of this man, and her affection increased as she felt the necessity of a protector.

The sun had set, and from the westward came the perfumed breeze, which, lightly skimming over the island of Sicily, diffused itself over the water. The felucca hugged the land; and in the still evening, the voices of those on shore reached the vessel. Here and there the busy hum of children, and now and then the notes of music, struck upon the ear; whilst the ripple of the water, which sparkled with phosphorescent brightness, marked the lazy progress of the vessel. On the forecastle the crew were assembled; one, more attuned to harmony than the rest, sang a Sicilian air, in the mutilated Italian of that island; it was a plaintive song; the burthen of it was of love, and it was listened to with marked attention. At the

conclusion, a hymn was warbled, in which all on board joined, not in the rough strains of English seamen, but in the soft, subdued tones of a milder region. Then all seemed hushed, excepting the slight dash of water against the felucca's bows.

"The world," said Konigsmark, "holds out great inducement to travel; every nation has its peculiarities, and every set of men, although of the same calling, have a marked difference. The vicinity to the shore inspires confidence; and those seamen who but two hours since would have trembled at the appearance of a sail, see how, forgetful of the cares of life, they lie down upon those hard planks, and seek repose; and now, when vigilance is most required, they sleep. Only one man directs the vessel; all our lives are in his hands; and such is the confidence inspired by custom, that even when unnumbered perils surround the frail craft, the crew sleep in peace, and awake with cheerful countenances. So with nations; he who directs is left with the responsibility and the danger; the rest pay,

eat, sleep, or fight, as he directs. And in love, Isabella, in fond, confiding love, does not the woman rest her whole security, and peril her whole life, on her confidence in the man. All differ, yet all are the same. The exterior may vary, but the heart, and soul, and life, and thought, are nearly similar in all nations. Women live on, reposing still in the constancy of men. Men deceive, yet still, throughout all nature, the same confidence is again manifested. You, now, fair Isabella, whose eyes twinkle like those stars above us, you would call that moon to attest your love, and bear witness of your affection ; and I should raise my hand, to attest my willingness to share my life with you, in all peril and in all difficulty. And then, when others looked upon your love-inspiring countenance, and caught the flame which brightens in your eye, the moon would cease to be a witness, and a rising star usurp its place."

"Never, Konigsmark, never ! Young as I am, uninstructed as I am, I feel that where my affections are once placed, there they will ever remain."

"So most women say and think ; and yet how few outlive a month's solitude, even with the men of their choice. We all require the charm of society. The uniformity of the world must be sometimes diversified ; and believe me, dear Isabella, all one's life is a long time to love only one object."

"Alas ! what can you mean by this conversation ? You whisper it guardedly in my ear, and draw from me the declaration of my constancy, and then as suddenly discredit my words."

"There is the land, sweet girl—why do you tremble so ?"

"I cannot tell—I cannot control it. My blood runs rushing through my veins, and a tremulous feeling overcomes me."

"Listen, beautiful girl. At this moment all the world seems hushed in repose ; our words are unheard by any but ourselves ; and here, uninfluenced by the curiosity of others, I can pour out my heart to you."

"Isabella felt the warm pressure of his hand, and an involuntary motion made her aware she had returned it. He turned his

face to hers, and, gazing for a second into her clear dark eyes, as if to read the secret of her soul, he continued.

“Not far from us is the land. This vessel is chartered and paid for by me. She is bound to land me at any port I may select, between Nota Bay and Naples. Life has few charms for me, but in its excitements ; if you will be my companion, I will direct the man at the helm to run her into this bay, and land. Here we will begin life, and you shall share the dangers and difficulties of a man, whilst you exhibit all the softness and the charm of woman.”

“With you, dear Konigsmark, I could for ever feel happy ; but perhaps some transient passion may make you regret this step. I am a poor weed, thrown, as it were, upon the great ocean of life ; and, although I have been stolen, wrecked, bought and sold, and as pure and as chaste as that moon above us. I have little to lose and all to gain. The discovery of my birth rests entirely upon the mark upon me. Deserted by you, where, oh ! where can I go, and how can I exist ?

To you I owe my liberation and my unstained honour. Circumstances, I am aware, are apparently against me ; but I feel, I know, my innocence. I did not, I confess, expect this avowal ; but I am too proud to have received it, and too grateful to refuse it."

"Is it your wish, my Isabella, to land here, or continue to Naples?"

"That last word has a charm for me. I somehow feel as if the first sun that ever these eyes beheld shone at that moment over Naples, and I have learnt to think it the place of my birth ; but if I could direct you to our cottage in the mountain, which is somewhere in that dark frowning land of Calabria, there would I wish to land, and try and retrace my life."

"It is for you to decide. 'This hand I feel is mine ; that heart, which beats quickly, and sends the torrent-rushing blood through your veins, is mine also. To me it is matter of indifference whether our bridal couch be here, or on the shore of Sicily or Calabria. We are now not far from Messina. Yonder are the few lights left to warn the inhabitants

of the night. There, or somewhere thereabouts, is the place whence you were taken by your nominal parents. Choose, but quickly ; each moment appears an hour to me, and the chill of the evening ill accords with my fevered blood. Even now, the wind can scarcely fill the sail, and, before we could reach the further shore, would dwindle to a calm. Here, cradled on the ocean, let us decide to remain. We could not thread the maze of the slippery path you described, which led you to the shore ; and in Messina all are asleep, excepting those who waste their hours over the exciting cards. It were better to remove to our cabin."

Konigsmark rose, and, taking Isabella by the hand, pointed to the clear moon, and said, "Be that the witness of my vows." As he looked, his superstitious feelings crowded upon his imagination, and there distinctly, to his credulous eyes, in the land of the bright luminary, he fashioned the form and figure of the child, as it appeared in the magic bowl of the Lapland witches ; and there, too, described by the Arab boy,

walked the baby bride to the altar. It was a strange feeling, and the cold clamminess of his hand was felt by her who, in all the sincerity of a woman, lifted her hand to his, and pointing to the moon, swore fidelity, obedience, and unalterable love and affection to the man beside her.

"How very strange it is," she said ; "but I could declare that iron ring upon your finger has burnt me, and yet your hand is cold. Take it off, dear Konigsmark,—there is a spell upon it."

"Then," said Konigsmark, "it is a favourable spell ; for it has warmed the hand which is only mine."

"Why, look," said the girl, as she held her taper fingers in the clear moonlight, "here is a mark as if of a burn, corresponding exactly with the round of the ring ! Take it off, and measure it, dear Konigsmark ! It is odd, the sensation of fear which creeps over me. And now it feels as cold as if it had been immersed in ice."

"I hope," said Konigsmark, with a forced smile, "that your affection may out-

live the mark, or it will be very transitory indeed."

"As long as you retain the ring which has made that mark, my affection shall remain. That ring shall be the pledge of my love—this mark the sign and seal of my devotedness. I have sworn it, and now I feel happier in the certainty of your protection—in the assertion of your love."

"It is strange, Isabella, but the ring appeared warm to me ; and since I first put it on, I have, I suppose, grown somewhat larger, for I have in vain tried to take it off. It is not such as kings or princes would wear, but, to my eyes, it has more value *now* than the finest brilliant. Come, dearest ; the night-air grows chill. The little sail lies uselessly against the mast ; all nature seems reposing ; not even from the shore comes the sound of human voices. And the vessel, resting like a bird upon the glassy mirror of a lake, no longer disturbs the ocean in its progress ; and there, beneath, reflected in the clear bosom of the sea, are all the stars of heaven. We are, as it were, between

two eternities ; but let us not, in our admiration for that which is above and below us, forget our mortality. Lean upon me, sweet Isabella ; your step seems faltering ; it is ever so when timid woman yields herself up to all the tremulous anxieties of love."

* * * * *

"Quick ! quick !" said the master of the felucca, "and take in a reef ; lower the mainyard. Come, come, my lads ; this is no time for sleep. Yonder it comes ; I hear the whizzing wind aloft ; and see how yon black cloud arises over Messina ! It is well we are in smooth water ; and if I could but get the slightest breath of wind, I would run the Bella Ragazza on shore on Sicily, if I could not get within the Mole of Messina. Hark how the storm rages aloft ; whilst here below we are becalmed. Down with the mizen and the jib ! What use are sails, when there is not a breath to fill them ?"

Those who have been much in the Mediterranean, know how suddenly gales arise, and how frequently the vessel lies becalmed,

whilst overhead the clouds fly rapidly, and the howl of the wind is heard.

There were others on board, and one whose cheek would have blanched with fear at the sudden preparations for a gale; but neither that fair and beautiful creature, nor the bold, fearless Konigsmark, seemed alarmed at the orders, or at the rapid footsteps of the crew. Every word spoken on deck was heard below. Konigsmark was a stranger to fear; and she who now regarded him as her husband, caught the confidence he inspired, nor heeded the threatening storm, nor the dark thunder-clouds which so rapidly had arisen. With him, and near him, what danger could alarm her? Then let the wind howl, the lightning flash, and the sea rise; she cared not. The timely warning of the captain occasioned no fearful forebodings; nor did the continued remarks of the crew, as they watched the black cloud extending itself over all the land, and now beginning to veil the bright lamp of the night, awake one alarm in the all-confiding bosom of Isabella. Konigs-

mark was nursed in the school of adventure. Young as he was, he had learned to turn all occurrences to his own advantage, and therefore, as it was likely to rain and blow, and to be exceedingly uncomfortable on deck, he was content to enjoy the present hour in a comfortable shelter from the storm.

CHAPTER IV.

"Incidit in Scyllam qui vult vitare Carybdim."

THE crew of the *Bella Ragazza* consisted of the padrone and four men. Feluccas are of a rig not easily managed in a gale. The long unwieldy mainyard requires great management, and once down, requires much manual labour to get it up again. All was snug and, ready for the breeze, and, by way of getting closer to the shore of Sicily, from which the breeze threatened to come, advantage was taken of the calm to sweep the vessel nearer the land. Although overhead the heavy clouds hung like a pall, and from the westward the lightning and the thunder seemed rapidly approaching, yet not the slightest breeze disturbed the calm

surface of the water—a large drop or two of rain fell with a heavy splash upon the deck, or was heard like a pebble thrown into the sea.

“ Cheer up, my lads! a few strokes more, and we shall be able to lie in security. Get the anchor ready, Pietro.”

With all the willingness of Neapolitans, Sicilians, or Maltese, to shun work, the crew saw the necessity of doing their utmost now, to avoid being under-weight during a gale. As yet, the water was too deep for anchorage, but a very few fathoms further onwards they knew the ridge of the bank extended ; and there, in smooth water and under the lee of the land, it would be more desirable to remain in security than to be buffeted about in the Pharo ; besides which, the rocks of Scylla and Charybdis had sung many a fatal dirge over the lifeless corpses of shipwrecked mariners. They therefore tugged at the long oar with willingness, whilst Pietro made the requisite preparations for anchorage ; but, as they tugged, they talked.

“Bend your backs to it, my lads, and give all your force,” the padrone said, as he left the helm and lent his utmost assistance. “It will save many an hour’s work, a little extra labour now. This rain begins to come faster, and I can smell the land more distinctly. Is the anchor ready, Pietro?”

“All ready!” said Pietro, who still bustled about, preferring to do little or nothing rather than to aid his shipmates.

“Have you got the chalk of St. Paul’s Bay about you, Pietro,” said one of the men, “that you would rather run the chance of shipwreck, protected by this charm from the saint’s anchorage, than be at anchor here in a minute? Lend us a hand with the sweep; the ropes wont run away by themselves.”

“Never satisfied,” grumbled Pietro. “The padrone tells me to do one thing, and you another.”

“That’s a mistake, shipmate. You have done the one, so now come and assist at the other. By the Virgin! I begin to think it is too late. Here comes the squall.”

Pietro, who was always ready to take the easiest place, ran forward to the anchor. In a second, the little vessel was broadside into the squall ; and Pietro, resolving to do nothing without orders, let go the anchor. The small cable ran rapidly through the hawse-holes ; for a second, the anchor held and jerked the vessel round to the wind, when the cable snapped, and the *Bella Ragazza*, from perfect security, became in a dangerous position. It is only a gun-shot across the Pharo, and yet how many vessels have been lost there ! A distance of two miles looks insignificant for the rising of a sea, yet many a heavy roll of its surges has beat against the rugged shore of Calabria. The first burst of the storm was much too heavy for a vessel of the *Bella Ragazza*'s insignificance to venture under sail ; the crew, therefore, giving one or two most seaman-like maledettos on the head of Pietro, began to haul in the cable and then to close-reef the sails. The very whirlwind was at its height ; the wind roared, the rain fell in torrents, and the sea bubbled up. The pa-

drone was aware of the danger to which ultimately he might be exposed, whilst the darkness of the night contributed to magnify his apprehensions.

“By all the saints in the calendar!” said one of the men, “our passengers take it coolly. He must be an old sailor not to feel this squall; and the girl! why, if she was not as used to the sea as a gull, she would have been screaming about the deck like a Mother Cary’s chicken.”

“By the Pope!” said another, “the night is as black as a funeral.”

“Now then, my lads,” said the padrone, “let us try the Bella Ragazza under a little of her sails; if the wind would only keep steady for an hour, we should be able to near the shore, but it flies in every direction. How long does it want to daylight?”

“Three long hours,” answered one of the men; “by which time the wind must have blown itself out, if it continues like this; and that lightning at each flash blinds one for half an hour afterwards.”

The main-sail was now about to be tried;

and scarcely had the canvas cleared the deck when it was caught by the wind, and, in spite of all precautions, it flapped with violence, and split.

The padrone crossed himself, one or two of the seamen cursed, and Pietro, looking at the miraculous chalk, congratulated himself as to the impossibility of shipwreck.

In the mean time, the small vessel, blown by the restless violence of the wind, now began to feel the effects of the sea. She had drifted half way across, and the remaining distance to the lee shore of Calabria was becoming every moment more alarming. The heavy, dark clouds, which settled over the land, obscured it—the most practised eye could only discern that land was there, from the darkness and the loom.

The mizen-sail was now tried upon the mainmast ; but it being made of lighter canvas, very little reliance could be placed on it. They set it carefully, and the felucca became more steady ; there was no sea to signify, for the force of the wind kept it down, blowing off the top of each wave which flew over

the vessel. Another hour, and then the daylight would appear ; and with what anxiety did they look forward to this !—for, as to their actual position, they were in great ignorance. At last, the wished-for dawn began to appear, and, as either hopes or fears predominated, the land was looked for to windward or to leeward. The wind still howled in its fury ; and, although the felucca kept steady under her canvas, she did not apparently forge much ahead.

The daylight came from the Calabrian side, but dark and dreary was the prospect ; the sea appeared one sheet of white water, hissing and bubbling in mad fury, and now the dark heavy clouds pointed to the high land to leeward. As the daylight increased, the danger became more palpable ; it was impossible for the small vessel to claw off the land, and Pietro's officiousness had sacrificed the last hope in its emblem—the anchor. Dark, angry, and scowling as the morning broke, there was still little danger as to loss of life—the vessel could at any time be stranded, and the only difficulty was the selection of a place. Plunder, of course, was inevitable ; but the seamen had little to lose, and

by yielding up the little property there might be, their lives were safe, and assistance would be given to save the vessel ; she could be of no value to the freebooting plunderers of Calabria.

At last the day broke fully, and through the thick mist the breakers on the iron-bound coast began to be visible ; the high land seemed to frown defiance, whilst the sea dashed against its base and threw its white spray high upon the rocks.

The dawn of day, the loud conversation on deck, the roar of the wind, and the rolling of the vessel, awoke Konigsmark from his dream and his reality of love, and catching some words of apprehension, he kissed the pale cheek of Isabella, and ran on deck ; in a second he comprehended the danger ; and after whispering something to the padrone, returned to the cabin.

“ Our nuptial couch, dearest girl, has not been one of roses, nor do we wake to all the pleasures or the luxuries of life. I know you well—your dauntless courage, and your firmness ; and therefore I speak to you, not as to a

timid girl, ready to faint at the pattering of a mouse along the floor, but as a woman above her sex in misfortune and in courage. We are close to the shore of Calabria, and our shipwreck is inevitable!"

"Can I be of any service?" said the intrepid girl. "I have no fears. Are you not near me? I care not for winds or waves, or rocks or sands. Am I not yours?—and is not a Konigsmark here?"

"Can you swim, dear girl?"

"But a little," was the reply. "My Greek jailers took care not to allow me the liberty of my limbs even in the sea."

"I shall not leave you, dearest girl—"

"I feel *that*!" said Isabella, interrupting him, "or I had never devoted myself to you."

"It requires all your firmness, Isabella; for should we be obliged to swim on shore, the cling of those affectionate arms would be fatal to both. You must only rest your fingers on my shoulders; the least pressure will be sufficient to keep you afloat, and remember that, if overcome by fear—"

"Stop!" interrupted Isabella. "Speak of

that which may happen, not of that which never has, nor ever shall overcome me. I comprehend your meaning—the slightest assistance will float me—the least embarrassment to your actions, sink *you*. *I* may not reach the shore, but *you* shall not fear my fatal embrace. I almost wish the moment had arrived to convince you that the woman who has become yours is, if not worthy of your love, above your contempt.”

“Come, dearest, on deck. Should the vessel strike, the nearer the danger, the better our chance; besides, I shall not leap unprepared with other aid.”

The long raven hair of Isabella was blown in the gale, her slight dress fluttered in the breeze; but her eye looked at the danger undaunted, and her face, pale and languid below, became flushed and animated on deck. She held fast hold of the weather gunwale, her look fixed upon the high and rugged mountains—the surf and the roar of the sea were unnoticed—she was endeavouring to bring back to her memory the spot from which she embarked. How could she fear what appalled others?

Her Konigsmark was with her, and she could overcome all difficulty, all danger.

As the Bella Ragazza drew nearer to the shore, her motion increased as the rebound of the sea altered the regular run of the waves. The seamen, with the eye of indifference—for in those climates they are amphibious—watched the gradual approach of the vessel, the padrone alone excepted; for the craft was his, the only support of a family to whom he was attached with all the jealousy of a Neapolitan. His was inevitable ruin. The savings of many years of hard and unremitted labour had enabled him to purchase her; he had made but three voyages; and such was the hard condition of his fate, that he saw destruction in a place where of all others he least anticipated it. Pietro's over zeal, his own hastiness in setting the main-sail, or attempting to do it, during the violence of the gale, had hastened the wreck: they had still another anchor, but there was no break to windward to warrant the hope that the gale might cease. Overhead, the clouds skimmed along, and the crown of the hills seemed sailing rapidly through an

ocean of those thick, overwhelming fluids. The land of Sicily, now plainly visible, appeared so close, that it was a marvel how the sea could rise in so short a distance; whilst the wind, growing stronger in the squalls, seemed striving to burst through the thin sail which defied its power.

“ Santa Maria ! ” said the padrone, crossing himself, “ in half an hour more, ‘ Nada. ’ ” As he said this, he placed his thumb-nail inside his upper teeth, and withdrew it rapidly, making a sharp noise. “ Oh ! dolce speranza, ” he continued, looking to windward—“ none—none—”

“ Always hope to the last, ” said Konigsmark. “ Look, Capitano, at this slim, beautiful girl!—look at the hope in her eyes, and gather courage from her unshaken countenance.”

“ She does not lose her all on this venture—the dresses which may fall to the plunderers the first milliner can replace, and you are near to protect and supply her.”

“ But suppose all my fortune, like yours, was about my person ? ”

“ That iron ring, ” said the padrone, “ would

purchase food." At this moment, a sudden squall split the mizen, and the vessel was helpless.

"How strange it is," said Isabella, not a feature of whose countenance underwent the slightest change, "that after so many years, I should return to be shipwrecked here! I could almost positively declare that round that jutting angle is the small sandy bay from which I embarked, and where, if a small vessel were well steered, a shelter might be found. It was such a morning as this, excepting that the wind was light, that I embarked, and the remembrance of that point is strongly engraven on my memory."

"Do you know anything of this coast?" said Konigsmark to the padrone.

"I never was so close to it before, and never wish to be again," was the answer.

"This lady came from these parts," continued the Swede, "and she is of opinion that behind that bluff point is a sandy bay protected from these winds, with water enough for you to run close to the shore. What say you? are you bold enough to run for the desperate hope?"

The padrone seemed not to hear the question, and, if he did, it was plain he was not in accordance with Konigsmark. It requires some courage to run headlong upon a lee shore, and wantonly to wreck the vessel which is the stay and prop of our existence ; good seamen know how requisite this is, to save the crew, as experienced hunters know how to fall to save their limbs. To run on a sandy beach is far better than to be driven broadside on to the rocks ; but the *Bella Ragazza* was the captain's all—his every hope—and he clung to the chance—the almost impossible, and certainly most improbable chance, that *something* might occur to save the vessel, which now, lying across the sea, rolled heavily. The water-cask, which had never been lashed, now broke adrift, and breaking its way through the thin gunwale, rolled overboard, and the padrone's eyes followed it as it tumbled over and over in the sea ; it was a part of his property lost, and he felt it was but the forerunner of the rest. Pietro began now to look at his chalk ; and, somewhat dubious as the danger grew more evident, he entered into a secret compact with St. Paul to burn

certain candles to his honour, if, in this case, the magic power of the cave should continue supreme. The others frequently ejaculated the names of Santa Maria and San Francisco ; it was evident that the poor fellows volunteered all they knew to appease their respective saints. The padrone alone was silent ; and, if he muttered anything, it was connected with home. It was strange, the forewarning he seemed to have had,—for even now a man who could dive like an otter, and buffet the surf like a seal, could scarcely be deprived of all hope.

The two the most unconcerned were Isabella and Konigsmark ; the first believed the second could overcome all dangers. She regarded him as a woman blindly, fondly in love, ever regards the object she adores ; although her eyes occasionally wandered from his to the rough sea which whitened the rocks, yet she caught no fear, and returned to the sweet dwelling on his countenance with that intense look which never can be mistaken.

Konigsmark felt convinced that he should escape. The Lapland witches had shown him the star which ruled his destiny, and in the

confident belief that his life of adventure had scarcely begun, and that he was reserved for some better death than drowning like a young dog, he nerved himself for the moment now fast approaching, and, with the coolness which characterized all his movements, drew towards him one of the large sweeps, and cutting off the ends of two or three small ropes, he tied them at various distances along the oar, and to each end fastened a small piece of wood ; he then turned to Isabella, and remarked, " Although danger is the sailor's companion from the hour he embarks to the minute he lands, yet you perceive there are times when a panic unmans them. Look at these fellows, all mumbling some Ave or some Paternoster, crossing themselves violently, kneeling and praying. I wonder if they ever read the fable of the wagoner who was told to put his shoulder to the wheel. If, instead of calling upon the saints to help them, they were to help themselves as I have done in preparing this raft for our mutual safety, I would wager my iron ring against my Isabella's eyes—and that is fearful odds—that every one would land in security.

As for the padrone, he has struck his colours without firing a shot ; he is muttering about his Moglia and his Bambini instead of looking after himself. Lovers waft sighs on every breeze, but I never heard of one arriving safe at its destination. If Vratz were here, he would soon alter the current of their thoughts. You are not afraid ?”

“ Afraid !” answered Isabella—“ afraid, near you ! I verily believe the greatest coward alive would feel security in your presence.”

“ Then at the critical moment—if we are obliged to leap into the sea—remember to fix your eyes and your hands upon either of these ropes. I shall be near you, and will not leave your side ; if we are obliged to quit this oar, remember, your coolness alone can save both.”

“ Fear me not, Konigsmark ; the very dread of losing you would keep me steady to my purpose ; we are getting very close, and see, just beyond us here, how the water hisses and boils.”

“ It is a sunken rock ; the padrone seems to eye it with dismay.”

The felucca was now drifting broadside on to the danger which Isabella had detected; it might still have been avoided by hoisting the foresail, and shooting past it; but, although Konigsmark had seen something of nautical life, he knew very little of the power of sails, or the time requisite to give an impulse to a vessel: in the mean time the rain and the wind continued. The Sicilian shore was invisible; and nothing could be seen but the angry sea around, and the frowning land they were fast approaching.

"We shall be on this rock in a minute or two, padrone," said Konigsmark; "is there no avoiding it?"

"Ruin! ruin!" answered the half-frantic man; "all lost,—all! and the craft named after my eldest daughter—for she is called the *Bella Ragazza de Napoli*—wrecked, and I, the support of them all—drowned!"

"Run her on shore at once," said Konigsmark; "try for that little bay: look there, it is exactly where the Signora pointed out, with a boat on its beach."

This was not lost on the crew, who instantly

ran to hoist the foresail, but it was too late ; the vessel had drifted too far in shore ; the sail was, however, set, and the craft, falling a little off, began to surge ahead. Pietro ran to the helm—it was useless ; the vessel fell with a heavy end upon the rock already mentioned ; the sternpost and rudder were torn away, and a rush of water heard below ; the vessel's head flew round off towards the land ; and even now, had they kept the sail up, she would have cleared the rock, and run the crew close to the shore before she sank ; but Pietro, ever officious, let go the fore halyards, another let go the sheet ; again the vessel dashed upon the outer ledge of the rock which she would have cleared ; it drove through and through her, holding her so fast that the next sea did not raise her clear of it. She was now fast filling with water, and Konigsmark, who preferred his chance with the sweep to the better chance of remaining by the wreck, (for to the swim you can only come at last,) threw the sweep overboard, and calling to Isabella, he said, " Now, jump before it is washed away."

There was not an instant between the word

and the deed ; the heroic creature leaped into the sea, and arose to struggle uselessly in the water ; she had missed the sweep, and, unable to catch the wood which floated near her, was again immersed by the next wave, which buried her beneath its foam ; she again came to the surface, and, in spite of the whirl of waters that foamed and hissed around her, and the knowledge also of her perilous situation, felt she was supported by Kónigsmark, and closed her hand upon the rope : “ Quick ! ” said her lover, as he placed her against the sweep, “ keep it under your bosom, and cling to it ; above all things hold on the rope,—I am near you.”

Another sea now broke upon the swimmers, who were watched with intense interest by those who clung to the wreck, and who meditated the same experiment if these landed in safety. Isabella, well cautioned, held fast, as the sea again swept over her.

“ Courage ! courage ! ” said Konigsmark, as he recovered his breath, “ this is not the worst which may occur. Get confidence, darling, by overcoming the first danger.” Again and

again the sea swept past and over them, and each time, as the gallant girl felt her security, she looked and smiled at Konigsmark, but never spoke. The nearer they approached the shore, the worse became the trial. The water was one foam, and continually breaking. Isabella, though much fatigued, still held on, and Konigsmark, who saw the change which exhaustion works upon the features, now kept closer to her, and passing his left hand round her waist, swam with his right, partially resting on the sweep, and thus propelled it forwards. He had reserved his strength for the coming difficulty, and his words animated and cheered his companion ; at last she said, in a faint voice, " I fear I am growing too weak to hold any longer ; save yourself, Konigsmark, and bear about you the remembrance of Isabella's love."

" Is your courage gone with your strength ?"

" Never !" she replied. " I can meet my fate without dread. My only pang is leaving you."

" Now is the time to prove both ; put your hands on my shoulders, leave the sweep to me, and now for the effort."

The brave and lovely girl, undaunted, did as

she was desired. Konigsmark turned the oar end on, and propelled it towards the shore, and with his burthen light as a feather,—for she obeyed his injunctions,—he struck lustily out. The sea roared behind them, and forced them onwards with impetuous dash; the danger grew less and less as the shore was neared; again and again the tumbling waves urged them forwards, until the continued immersion began to act upon the nerves of Isabella, which was felt by the harder grasp upon Konigsmark's shoulder; and at the moment when she overcame her fears, and resolved to perish, leaving Konigsmark free, a boisterous wave threw them within their depth, whilst the receding wave again carried them out. Konigsmark seized her by the hair, and making one desperate effort, held her whilst the next sea receded, although he felt the sand giving way beneath his tread:—one more struggle,—he caught Isabella in his arms, and with indomitable courage, and staggering under his load of love, fell exhausted just beyond the reach of the insatiate waves.

CHAPTER V.

“It ill becomes the wife of his Majesty’s ambassador to receive her company with a lowering look,” said Montague to his Countess. “In this world, he is but a shallow-pated politician who has not one complexion for his home, and another for the public. The Duchess of Cleveland, I tell you, madam, can injure us deeply. Who rule our light-hearted monarch but women? And although this lady is all your virtuous tongue may think fit to lavish in abuse, she has, I tell you, madam, power, authority, and spite—and that last will set in motion the two former.”

“Forgive me, Montague,” said the mild and excellent wife, “if my feelings have mastered

my poor diplomacy. I, who am young—and if Lely's pencil could give immortal youth a bloom, future ages will say I was somewhat well-favoured in my twenty-third year—can not easily bear a rival, far my superior in age, and whose sacrifice of her honour has been rewarded by a title. In spite of your kindness, dear Montague, in endeavouring to deceive or to blind me, and thus not make me aware how little influence I hold over your affections, I can see—and our sex are clear-sighted in these affairs—that the infamous woman, the mistress of the king, has usurped my place in your affections. I will not reproach you, Ralph; and if tears do start from my eyes, consider them as the overflowings of a heart wounded in its pride and in its honour.”

Montague, the idol of all women—and, as Grammont has described him, “having no gift of personal appearance, but possessing a manner and a tongue which made him irresistible”—remained silent for some minutes. Allowing the first burst of grief somewhat to soften his wife's heart, he fixed his eloquent eyes upon her, and managed, by the power he

exercised over himself, actually to appear to participate in her grief ; then, suddenly taking her by the hand, he led her to a large mirror which adorned his room, and placing her before it, said—" I leave my defence to that beautiful reflection."

The Countess was a silly and a vain woman—she was one of the Windsor beauties—the king had admired her—and her vanity had been gratified, although her virtue had been alarmed.

" Was the Duchess of Cleveland," said Montague, with a well-managed look of indignant mortification, " ever like *that* ? Can her eyes rival those stars, or can all her paint and patches outdo nature's finest work ? You have hurt me—wounded me, by this unjust, unmerited aspersion ; but it is natural that one so good, so amiable, so virtuous as yourself cannot believe that vice can repent and become steeled against further vice. The Duchess is a repentant sinner, and she instils into the young and beautiful Countess of Sussex's ears those principles which will make her the pride and ornament of her age. Clear those eyes, my love ; I am, as you know, constrained to visit

this woman, and to uphold her ; it is the king's desire ; and remember, we are but the servants of the king."

Although Montague used his best endeavours to conceal his thoughts and actions, the quickness of the woman was not so easily to be hoodwinked. The Countess *felt* that she was slighted. All the flattery, however soothing—and that of beauty is the most desired—failed, however, to remove the impression.

"Although the king requires us to notice her," said the Countess, "he does not desire you to spend day after day in her society ; nor does it, even in this licentious court, become a minister to drive about a young married woman for hours and hours, to the neglect of his own wife and his proper avocations."

"Good," said Montague, with a smile. "By the king's name, I verily believe your ladyship is jealous of the Countess of Sussex—a mere child—a perfect infant—whose ears would more readily listen to some tale of the nursery than to softest whisper of love. I could readily forgive your idea of the Duchess of Cleveland ; but for her daughter, that surpasses credulity."

“The Countess of Sussex, however young, is a married woman.”

“My dear ! my dear !” interrupted Montague, in rather a higher strain, “this is becoming indecorous and absurd. It is true, I have driven the Countess about, and purposely to withdraw myself more and more from her mother, who is still anxious to recover the king’s love, and who is not ashamed to own it. It is a strange affair for a king to devolve upon his representative ; and she, knowing that I make reports of her speeches, is the more eager that I should be near her, in order to pester me with the ready oath of her unsubdued attachment ; but for the Countess of Sussex !”—and here Montague threw himself on a fauteuil !—“it would hardly be supposed that the king’s ambassador would intrigue with the king’s own child. The licentiousness of his Majesty’s court would hardly sanction so gross a violation of trust and honour as this.”

“But how comes it, Montague, that, if the Duchess has taken a confessor without a hood, and has poured out her soul before him, declaring she repented of her wickedness and

vice, that she still continues to tell this minister of her mind that she is anxious to recover and retain that love which led to her vicious mode of life, into which she is desirous again to fall. I fear me much this repentant sinner—this inculcator of the good principles—seems like his majesty's ambassador, somewhat of a contradictory nature. You see, dear Montague, although a very silly woman, I am shrewd enough to discover a discrepancy: even the best diplomatists somewhat overplay their games occasionally. I wonder Brett has not come to your aid, or how he allowed me so much of your time uninterrupted."

At this moment, Brett came in, and her Excellency indulged in somewhat of a satirical laugh.

"The Spanish ambassador is anxious to speak to your Excellency."

"Indeed," said the Countess; "then he must have driven a good pace to have returned to Paris by this hour, for he told me yesterday that three o'clock was fixed for his interview with the king at Versailles; and it is only a quarter after that hour now."

"Tell his Excellency that I will be with him in a minute, Brett. My dear," began Montague—

"Let me beseech you, Ralph," said the Countess, leaning back and laughing—

"But listen, my dear."

"Brett's entrance at the very moment the quarter of an hour had expired was quite delicious. No, no ; I pray you, Ralph, remember the Spanish minister is awaiting your arrival. Do go, my love !" And here she held her hands up, and, indulging in a very inelegant laugh, she motioned her husband not to speak, but to go.

"The silliest woman may sometimes confound the cleverest man," said the Countess, when left alone. "I have wounded Montague in his tenderest point ; but he, being aware that my suspicions are aroused about that child, will try to soothe and flatter me. Alas ! what can he see in that baby Countess, who, too young for a woman, is yet a wife. I am confident I am not wrong in my suspicions, for some unaccountable feeling announced this to me ; and the old fortune-teller, the other night, whilst

whispering to others their good or bad intentions and fortune, said aloud, 'The stone which shall cause you the most serious fall shall not be of sixteen years' formation;' and she meant this baby Countess. Strange it is that men, however much beloved and adored at home, cannot rest contented with such happiness, but must seek a transient pleasure, and sacrifice their worldly comfort."

If ever woman doated on her husband, it was the Countess; if ever woman was forewarned of her coming wretchedness, it was the wife of the ambassador at Paris.

"I would you had not allowed so very exact a completion of the quarter of an hour, Brett; by my faith, the Countess is as jealous as a pet dog; she has as many visions as a fanatic—and I believe if I looked at a woman of one hundred, or a child of ten, she would be equally alarmed. Has there been any news of Ogle?"

"None," replied Brett. "He left his wife the evening of his marriage, and has since, I presume, occupied his valuable time with his friends."

"The money, Brett?"

“It will come to-day or to-morrow. Your Excellency need not fear his punctuality—Ogle will keep faith as well as the king, who sends over his bribes to the British parliament as regularly as the quarter arrives.”

“Lady Algernon will take care of the wife, whilst Ogle will devote his money and his time to the enjoyment of a bachelor’s life; his health is ill calculated for much excitement.”

“Here is a letter for your Excellency.”

“The old story, Brett; the Duchess is anxious to see me; and the usual enclosure for the king. I wish you would call shortly at her hotel and mention that I am obliged to go to Versailles, and recommend the Countess of Sussex to drive some distance from Paris; the poor child has pale cheeks and sunken eyes; the change will reinvigorate her. Go, go quickly, Brett!”

No sooner had Brett left the embassy, than Montague took the ambassadorial licence in those days, and which licence has not been relinquished in these days, of opening the Duchess’s letter. It is the business of a diplomatist to make himself acquainted—no matter how—with

all that concerns the State ; and surely, if there be no harm in looking into a stranger's letter, one may presume upon the secrecy of a friend. Montague was soon aware of the necessity of a strict surveillance over the Duchess, for it was evident that she was resolved to sacrifice everything for a continuance of the king's love. It was pride, ungovernable, uncontrollable pride, which kept her thus stretching after power and courtly favour, and for this she spoke of love—as if that love could be returned. In the letter now open to Montague's inspection, he read that he was now proffering his love, which the Duchess refused, and it was evident she thought to excite the king's jealousy, and thus gain her point ; of course, she was indignant ; and thus ran one part of the letter, after charging the king not to lend a credulous ear to anything Montague might assert about her :—"Never malice was like the ambassador's ; that, only because I would not answer to his love and the importunities he made to me, he is determined to ruin me ; nor must I forget to tell you that he told the King of France that many people had reported that he had made love to me, but

that there was nothing in it, for that he had too much respect for you to think of such a thing."

Montague, accustomed as he was to all the nice turnings of the sex, was rather astonished at the contents of the letter; he saw at once its object; but why the Duchess had accused him of malice was somewhat beyond him; she might make the king jealous by a straightforward averment that Montague had availed himself of the protection he proffered, to make propositions little in accordance with the love of one wholly and solely devoted to the king; and this he would have considered perfectly excusable. Life to him was like a game of chess; it was fair to avail one's self of every advantageous position; and if a knight or a bishop was sacrificed to defend either king or queen, or to gain any important point, why, the knight and the bishop might be honoured in history, whilst the game was won by their sacrifice.

With a tact quite worthy of Montague, he sent the letter, but with it one of his own, in which he spoke of the Duchess as having apparently given up all thoughts of her sovereign,

and devoted herself much to pleasure ; that she constantly drove to Versailles, and was somewhat honoured by the king ; and, from the questions he had asked her, he thought the Duchess would not refuse a powerful protector. Having read over his own production, he said to himself—" And now, my beautiful Duchess, we will see who can best play this game of life." Brett was never entrusted with these secrets. He was a very useful man to his Excellency on most occasions, and could be sent to draw attention to one quarter, whilst the actual attack was in another direction ; but, with the secret itself, save where money was concerned, he was kept in ignorance. His return to the embassy occurred at the very moment when a stranger was inquiring for the ambassador ; and, turning round to scrutinize the intruder, he found himself by the side of Konigsmark.

" We have lost sight of you, Count, for some months," said Brett ; " and in the mean while you seem to have been more familiar with the sun, for your face is bronzed. You must have travelled south."

" As far as Cairo," replied the Count, care-

lessly. "Business, pleasure, adventure, and fortune led me there, and led me back again. Is his Excellency visible?"

"He is very busy to-day, writing; but I will inform him of your arrival. Have you heard that your little friend the Lady Elizabeth is married?"

"I had not actually heard it before, although I was made acquainted with it."

"That is a contradiction, good Count."

"Not so, Colonel. A man may see without hearing."

"Yes; but he cannot see from Cairo to Petworth."

"That remains to be proved. A Lapland witch can see much further than that, and so can an Egyptian sorcerer."

"By my faith, Count, I neither believe in witches, conjurors, nor sorcerers,—my wish is to believe in such a divinity as Fortune; but since she never bestowed many of her favours on me, I am content to rest my faith on his Excellency the ambassador, whom I will now make acquainted with your arrival."

The interview was of short duration. Ko-

nigsmark could no longer assist his Excellency in any of his intrigues ; he learned that the star of his destiny was married, yet single, and that the surveillance of Lady Algernon was stricter than before ; this, and a few compliments completed the interview, and Konigsmark returned to his hotel, wondering over the Arab boy's hand and the sorcerer's power. His Excellency rode on the Versailles road, and met the Countess of Sussex.

CHAPTER VI.

It was the evening of the marriage of King Charles II. with his first wife, Maria Louisa of Orleans. Madrid was in all the excitement consequent upon such a festivity. The troops paraded, bands played, guns fired, and Viva el Rey resounded from every quarter of the city; even the haughtiness of the Don seemed laid aside, and the familiarity of the vulgar encroached a step in the midst of the rejoicings by day, and the preparations for the night. Two travellers rode to the hostel in the Calle del Sole; one was a stout, broad-shouldered, light-haired young man; the second, a slim, dark, Italian-looking boy; they both wore the costume of the country, which became

them extremely well, and, riding into the yard of the inn, called lustily about them for some time before they could procure any attendance: behind them trotted in two mules, driven by a boy, and laden, according to the custom of the country, with the traveller's baggage. The elder traveller alighted first, and seemed to pay much attention to the younger one, whom he helped to alight from his horse with great care.

"You should have been born a man," said Konigsmark, "for your courage is equal to your perseverance. Are you much fatigued?"

"So little," said a feigned voice, "that, if you feel disposed to carry out your plan of going to Tangiers, I am ready to mount again, and ride forward this moment."

"Enough, enough, Francisco; you would kill a stouter man than myself. Go you to the rooms. I will assist this youngster to unload his mules, and will join you in a moment. Amigo," continued Konigsmark, "for what is all this riot and noise in Madrid? Why are all these flags waving and boys shouting?"

He was told of the marriage above-mentioned. "And, moreover," said the astonished

man, who wondered at the ignorance of the questioner, "his Majesty has ordered a grand bull-feast to take place in the Plaça Major on the 22nd of this month, and half the nobility are determined to taurise for the honour of their respective ladies; it will be a sight which none can see without some fear, unless he be a Spaniard, and few foreigners have ever ventured to bait a Spanish bull."

"Is it very dangerous?" said Konigsmark.

"Santa Joaquina!" ejaculated the Spaniard, "that such a question should be asked in Madrid! Does any man face an enraged animal like a bull without some danger?—and remember, young man, if these bulls are not mad, they are made so. When two lovers quarrel for a girl, they sometimes refer the dispute to the bull, and one of the two will, in all probability, be saved the trouble of singing a serenade under the lady's window. Any danger!—take care you do not try it, or I may have to sell your baggage to pay the expenses of your funeral."

Konigsmark smiled. It was exactly the danger he courted; and but a little training

was requisite to place a man of his coolness and indomitable courage on a par with the savage brute ; still, although he resolved upon appearing in the arena, he thought it prudent enough to make himself acquainted with the difficulties likely to be encountered.

The biographers of Konigsmark differ vastly as to his character ; some make him nearly a saint, whilst others revile him as a sinner, and make a Don Giovanni a pattern of purity in comparison ; but all agree in his heroic bravery, his scorn of all danger, his coolness, and his presence of mind. The bull-bait was now uppermost in his mind.

Having seen the mules unladen, and recompensed the arriero, Konigsmark ascended the staircase, and walking along the corridor, arrived at his apartment. This corridor ran the whole length of the square of the building ; below was a garden, in the centre of which was a fountain ; the dripping of the water added much to the imaginary coolness, and the incessant fall during the hot hours of the day invited much to sleep. The fatigue and heat of the weather had overcome the tender strength

of Isabella, who, in her boy's attire, now slept soundly, nor stirred at the entrance of her lover. There reposed as true, as faithful a heart as ever responded to the warm pulse of love ; there, with flushed cheek, and with the secret of her sex betrayed in the palpitating bosom, which had liberated itself from the scanty vest, reclined the girl who had withstood or escaped all danger, until the smooth voice of Konigsmark had sounded in her ear. Even now she dreamt of him ; the perils of the road, the fatigue of the voyage over, she only dreamt of him to whom she had yielded up all that a woman can give to prove her love, and who never as yet had regretted the gift. Konigsmark stood for a minute surveying the recumbent form of the girl whose heart and soul was his ; the long luxuriant hair which had been interwoven into a knot, and concealed in the broad-brimmed sombrero, had now fallen, and hung in rich clusters over her shoulders ; her lips gave utterance to a sound, and that reached Konigsmark's ear as his own name. On earth she had no other stay or prop but him ; his love alone ruled her heart, and throughout the

wide universe there was none but he who retained authority over her. With light step, fearing to awake her, whose sound sleep had not been disturbed by the arriero who had deposited the luggage, Konigsmark crept to her side, and dwelling upon the lovely features before him, stooped down and imprinted a kiss, a fervent kiss, upon the red, pouting lips of his love. She never stirred, but a murmur of the name escaped her; she seemed to dream of happiness, nor started as those who find a feverish sleep from fatigue usually do; nor did the heat of the day, when sleep is scarcely ever sound, disturb the beautiful girl. With a lover's anxiety, Konigsmark opened the lattice, and with the hat which had fallen from her head, fanned her flushed cheeks; and, thus employed, the loud vivas which rent the air, the fire of artillery, the quick succeeding volley of musquetry, or the loud music of military bands, neither disturbed the one in her slumbers nor awakened the attention of the other. It was a beautiful scene to gaze upon, and never had Isabella looked more invitingly beautiful, nor Konigsmark regarded her with fonder affection

and more passionate love than at that moment. Those moments of supreme happiness, when the world and all its cares and troubles are forgotten, are so rare, are so refreshing to our nature, that we leave Konigsmark undisturbed in his avocation of circulating the cool air, to look outside of his inn, and trace a day of rejoicing in the proud city of the prouder inhabitants of Spain. Spaniards, unlike their neighbours, the French, are graver and more sedate in their amusements, and very few, even to the tune of their exciting boleros, dance themselves into feverish excitement. The graceful movements are all slow ; and although the legs and arms are much employed, they are elegantly quiet. Then, again, a fiesta in Spain is another word for licensed gambling : here may be seen all sorts and conditions of men congregated together in silent expectation of sudden gain. To win or to lose *seems* indifferent ; for whether Fortune is most kind or most adverse, the spectator could never judge from the countenance of the player. The last farthing of a mule-driver is staked and lost without the slightest betrayal of either appre-

hension or anger ; and the poor victim of cupidity retires to his family without the means of support for a day, as coolly and as good-humouredly as if he had won a fortune. The women at these fiestas also maintain a certain gravity ; their dress adds much to the sombre appearance ; and the loud laugh of contentment and happiness is heard only from the boys, who are as mischievous at Madrid as the urchins of London.

Very different are these things in France ; a fête day at Paris is, in reality, a holiday. Every face seems beaming with contentment ; there is an air of hilarity about the men which would degrade the character of a Spanish Don. The lively dance is scarcely finished, before it is renewed ; and thousands of games, all ingeniously contrived to ruin the player, are constantly kept up. Then the women, in their best attire, wear always a jocund countenance ; their small, mincing, but rapid step, the elegance of their costume, the liveliness of their manners, all tend to cheer the scene, and to banish for a day the world's cares and the world's frowns. There are no two countries where the manners

and customs are so opposite in these respects as in France and Spain.

Konigsmark, although so young, had learnt the necessity of conforming to the manners and customs of the people amidst whom he lived ; and, as drowsiness is a great feature in the Spanish character, he soon paid a compliment to the nation's customs, and fell asleep. He had never felt the danger of encountering the black eyes of a Spanish maiden ; and, believing Isabella possessed his heart, he slept in tranquillity, regardless of the danger which surrounded him, who had every charm to lure the affections of women. He had escaped in France unscathed, but it was because he had no time to be idle. Ah, the bane of life is in that word " idleness ;" and thousands of times must that saying of Doctor Johnson have occurred in all its truth to every man—" It is better to do the idlest thing in the world than to sit idle for half an hour."

The heat of the day had somewhat passed, when both travellers awoke ; the busy Isabella, recovered from her fatigue, instantly began to make Konigsmark comfortable by the ar-

ranging of his toilet, and those thousand nameless kindnesses which women bestow on those they love ; they had no servant, but one was to be engaged immediately.

Vratz had been *ordered*—for, in spite of his emancipation, Konigsmark occasionally forgot his situation—to repair to London to ascertain everything relative to the Lady Elizabeth ; and, if the following translation of the original letter be carefully perused, it will show the ambition of Konigsmark, and the point at which he always aimed : his letter was dated from Paris, but no mention is made of the month.

“ Paris, 1678. .

“VRATZ,—For your future guidance, you will carefully peruse this letter. We are separated; and so we shall remain for some time ; but your wants will be regularly supplied. After employing your time as I shall hereafter direct at Naples, you will proceed with all comfort to England ; and you will go to the Dutch ordinary, at the sign of the City of Amsterdam, in Broad-street, near the Royal Exchange. To that place I shall in future direct my letters, and there I expect to find you domiciled on

my return. Now as to the employment of your time at Naples, I wish it much to be expended in the search after the family of Isabella, who retains a lively affection for you, and who, remembering some of her early life (as you have heard her relate), is confident that her present name is not her right one, and that she was stolen from her parents from somewhere in the vicinity of Naples. Her age you know ; and, if she is the star of your destiny, you will do wisely to make inquiries. Perhaps, by this time, she may have left Messina, and you may meet her at Naples ; if so, I counsel you not to marry her—for I want your services in a matter which I have much considered, and which would place you in such independence, as would give you the means then of supporting your wife. If at the expiration of a month you should find all inquiries fruitless, proceed to Paris, and then to London. In London, you will make yourself acquainted with the domestics of Lord Ogle, who is now called Percy ; become familiar with his habits, and learn also where his wife is ; and be careful to inquire if the Lord Percy is of a hot and dangerous humour, such as would entice him to

rush into a quarrel easily ; also, if he be expert with the sword, or with what weapon he most prides himself. I know your zeal in my behalf, and your readiness to serve me upon all occasions ; remember, my movements depend upon your information, therefore, be not too sullen or niggard in that respect. If I succeed in my plans, Vratz, the faithful Vratz, shall never be forgotten. My first letter from Paris told you of my shipwreck, and that I had but a moment's thought to save Isabella from bandits, by sending her to Messina. She is provided with money, and, perhaps, we may never see her again ; but still I would discover her birth, if possible. I have received a letter from Stern, whom I have desired to go to England, but to remain at Hamburg until he hears from you. I should much wish you to discover Borosky the Polander, for he might much forward my intentions, and he promised me at parting to do my bidding whensoever I might require him—but do not bring him to England until I again tell you so to do—only keep him in hope of some employment.

“ Your friend,

“ KONIGSMARK.”

The reader will here remark, that the Count knowing Vratz's temper, was careful to blind his eyes as to the real fate of Isabella ; for since the event at Cairo, Vratz had divested himself of all jealousy, and most fervently believed that the Count had only rescued the lady at Malta from a sense of chivalrous honour, and, having placed her in comparative safety and with all appliances at Messina, had journeyed rapidly onwards to Paris and Madrid, pursuing with avidity some phantom, which lured the enthusiastic young Count into scenes of danger and difficulty.

Vratz, who consoled himself with rosolio and other liqueurs, and was, from frequent libations at the shrine of Bacchus, becoming a judge of wines, found himself very comfortable as his own master, and, for the first time in his life, knew the luxury of being an independent gentleman, excepting when such pleasure was added to his bill.

CHAPTER VII.

“ ASSUME the dress of your sex, Isabella ; it more becomes you than that of ours. You can but at most expect to pass for a pretty boy ; besides, it is unfeminine, and nothing so much destroys the charm which enchants in a woman, as any attempt at masculine boldness.”

“ I tell you, most learned Count, I am resolved to continue the privilege you have given me. Why did you dress me as a man—why teach me the independence of your sex, to rob me afterwards of its enjoyment ? Fear me not ; I will avoid a rivalry in love. The woman who is enamoured of the light hair and long tresses of Konigsmark, can scarcely covet the dark ringlets of your brother José. Like you, I am becoming

enthusiastic. I long to discern the ways by which our sex inveigle yours ; and who knows but that I may be summoned to the field to answer the challenge of some sunburnt jealous Don ?”

“ But you are discovered, Isabella. The heat of the day caused you, in your sleep, I presume, to forget your disguise ; and it must be a fool indeed who could look at you now, and for an instant mistake you for a boy.”

“ Give me my rapier and my sombrero, and, by the mass ! I will put on my best ring, and walk upon the Prado.”

“ It is wonderful the brilliancy of your eyes, my love. I cannot refuse that which seems to promise you so much pleasure, but I would have you beware : a word, misunderstood, may force you to draw that rapier, and imagine the crushing laughter which would overwhelm you with shame, should you flinch from the combat, or be obliged to shew your bosom to prove your sex ; then both your modesty and your courage would be sadly reprovèd.”

“ Come, come, Señor Count, you fear your rival in the road of love. I would wager a

dozen ounces of gold, that I supplant you in the affections of some black-eyed señora. The sun is about to set, and now the dark-eyed daughters of Spain will creep to the lattice, and from behind a fan watch those who pass near, and convey their wishes by its motions. This dress becomes me well. Come, good señor, the hour of darkness and of wickedness is at hand."

The playful manner of Isabella, her laughing eyes, and jocund countenance, overcame Konigsmark, and, although he again warned her how ill the male attire became the modesty of the woman, he was answered thus :

"Who first dressed me as a man, good Count ?—who told me that, so garbed, I should escape notice and rudeness—that, if attacked on the road, I should only be plundered of *money*—that I should learn the privileges of men, without the surveillance of women—and more, that I might see how far men were enticed into intrigue, and how readily the sex interpreted a glance? Come, here is your hat; put aside your sombre looks and wise saws. You know how truly this poor heart beats for you, and

you cannot fear my infidelity, when I am protected by this disguise and your company."

Konigsmark always adopted the costume of the country in which he resided. Quick at languages, he had gained sufficient knowledge of Spanish to ask a few questions; whilst Isabella, from her knowledge of Italian, Greek, and Maltese, became familiar with it almost immediately. Her dress betrayed her finely moulded limbs; for the inexpressibles only came to the knee, and were made to fit close to the figure; her small foot showed the leg to greater advantage, whilst the loose cloak which enveloped her hid from the most inquisitive eye that swelling undulation which makes somewhat of the sublime and beautiful of the sex. The hilt of the rapier passed from beneath the mantle, whilst the hair, gathered into a cluster and secured behind, was well concealed in the broad-brimmed hat; she looked a remarkably handsome boy; but eyes well accustomed to scan with scrutiny the human form could scarcely mistake the sex.

Konigsmark, who was at this time in his twenty-fourth year, of low stature, full set,

fair long hair, with rather a round face, was dressed according to the manner of a Spanish nobleman ; but an acute observer of mankind would have at once recognised the northern cast of features, so very different from the true descendant of Moorish and Spanish blood.

Passing through the various streets, they at length came upon the Prado ; and here the traveller would have supposed that the whole population of Madrid had assembled. It is in the midst of the multitude that the stranger is best concealed ; and the assumed swagger of Isabella passed unheeded : the sword had been so well arranged by Konigsmark, that she ventured a bold step without fearing the consequences of awkwardness, so common with those who for the first time wear the weapon.

There were many, many pretty women ; and, whilst Konigsmark eyed them with the inquisitive glance of a stranger, Isabella gave the cunning look of a forward boy, willing to be noticed.

“ By the mass ! ” she said, in a low voice, and in Italian, in which language they always

conversed, "that was a beautiful girl; and she had the bad taste to look more at you than at myself; the old Duenna, though, eyed me as a tigress would a lamb. I can understand well your dislike to wrinkles, and you gave a good proof of it there, for I would wager my first kiss of yon black-eyed beauty, that you never saw how quick-eyed was the watchful guard of so lovely a charge."

Konigsmark affected not to have noticed her.

"And yet your face flushed, Señor; and your eye met hers; and she betrayed herself in a glance; at any rate, however ignorant of the sensation a woman's eye may cause in your sex, I can see if the glance betrays indifference, or if there is a look of curiosity, mingled with more softness than is usual. Let us follow them; which way we walk, is indifferent; we are here only to see the people; and besides, I have a mind to make that old Duenna desperately enamoured of me, and this night I will serenade her."

Konigsmark suffered himself, apparently somewhat unwillingly, to be turned round, and

actually accelerated his pace, as Isabella remarked that she saw and recognised them. At this time, the *ritratto* was about to beat in the large square in front of the Cathedral, and many of both sexes moved off from the Prado in that direction.

"Your spirits are so high, José," said Konigsmark, "and you seem to derive so much pleasure from this novel scene, that I am disposed to yield to your wishes."

"Which are not adverse to your own, good Count. Beware of my jealousy. We are told that Spanish jealousy knows no bounds; an Italian loves warmly, and revenges fearfully." There was something more than mere bantering in this expression; it was the deep feeling of Isabella's heart, brought to life in her words.

"I understand you, José, and be you careful not to excite mine in your amorous adventure with the Duenna. They have turned to the right."

"Ay, and the old Duenna has observed us; that is the guardian of her charge's virtue; if I were a duchess, I would wager my coronet that, before eleven this night, I would receive

either a lock of that girl's hair, or that I would kiss her hand first and her cheeks afterwards."

"I am not so adventurous," said Konigsmark, as he watched the waving of the mantilla, and observed the quickened motion of the fan. "Besides, the Spanish women are reputed more difficult of access than those of any other European nation; they are strictly watched when young by their own sex, and, when married, jealousy supplies the guardianship. But here we are at the Cathedral, and a mighty concourse of people!"

"Keep close to them; how I love this adventure. I will make that old wretch's ears tingle. It is thus, is it, that age decoys youth, whilst it assumes to protect it?"

The Count and Isabella now fairly mingled in the mob—keeping close to the two ladies whose eyes had thus enticed them to the pursuit. With Isabella it was the love of mischief—the delight of seeing how foolish is old age when once it permits a wasted passion to overcome discretion. With Konigsmark it was far different. Of the Don Giovanni school, he was

fond of overcoming difficulties, and the more danger to be faced in the attempt, the greater zeal it added to the intrigue ; love and war divided his hours, and he was seldom taken unawares.

In Isabella's eagerness to entice the wrinkled Duenna, who pursed up her mouth, and kept her countenance at its handsomest point, thereby showing how she had studied her glass, she disregarded Konigsmark, who, serious in his endeavours, soon attracted the young lady's attention, and by the eloquence of his eyes made her understand his attentions. She was like a poor bird fascinated by the serpent—in vain she endeavoured to turn her eyes elsewhere ; they soon looked again at the dangerous object, whilst her flushed cheek and vacillating manner faithfully portrayed the struggle between curiosity and duty, between passion and principle. Nor were these moments lost with Isabella, who, not feeling the reserve of the male sex, was shortly in possession of the Duenna's hand, and nearly betrayed herself in her inclination to laugh aloud as she felt the pressure of the hand returned, and almost the

hand retained as Isabella affected to withdraw it.

The drums had beat, the last tune had ceased, the crowd betook itself to the various places of amusement, the young girl was heard to ask her Duenna to walk to the Praça Major where some fireworks were to be let off; but, the prudent Duenna, fearful that she might lose her young admirer in the crowd, or that he might be attracted by brighter eyes and younger cheeks, declared the air was too cool, that she was much fatigued, that fireworks were irreligious, and that it was bad to idle away time better devoted to prayer than wasted in observing the fiz of wet powder, or listening to the noisy explosion of musquetry.

“ Indeed, indeed, Donna Felipa, I should like to stay longer,” said the animated young girl, whose eyes met Konigsmark’s. “ We came out to see these fireworks, and if it be a sin, we can go to-morrow morning at seven o’clock to the cathedral, and ask forgiveness. I am not tired; and you, good Donna Felipa, are much too young and strong to be easily fatigued.”

“Remember, child,” said the Duenna, “we live at No. 10, Calle del Sole, and that is not so very close to the Praça Major ! Young and strong as I am,” said the Duenna, keeping herself as upright as a poplar tree, and only gracefully bending as she inclined towards Isabella, I feel not only somewhat fatigued, but disposed to retire ; for one so young as yourself, this crowd is dangerous, and we should be more amused at our window seeing the people pass or listening to some serenade.”

“But then, Donna Felipa, we might not see those we most wish to see.”

“If they wish to see you, there they will best know where to find you.”

At this moment, Isabella felt her hand gently pressed and relinquished ; the Duenna and her charge turned round, quickened their pace, and walked towards the Calle del Sole, whilst Konigsmark and Isabella followed.

“Do women retain their vanity so late in life ?” asked Isabella, as she tittered with pleasure.

“It would appear so,” resumed Konigsmark ; “even wrinkles and grey hairs fail sometimes to act as monitors.”

“ Let us return towards the Plaça Major, and seek other adventures.”

“ No, no, my young Giovanni, that is against all rule ; we must pay these ladies the compliment of seeing them home ; and then, waving our hands, we can return, or carry out the game by giving them a serenade. What say you to the latter ?”

“ I feel as if a new light had just shone to show me the many dangers which environ our sex. Even in themselves they cannot trust, if once a passion usurps the dominion of reason. In the error into which that Donna Felipa would rush, her charge might be sacrificed.”

“ It is common in Spain, and still more so in France ; and since Charles II. of England introduced the immorality of his court, the English women have become nearly as bad as their continental neighbours. Vice is very contagious, and has long been known as infectious ; but this is no time or place to moralize. See, here is the Calle del Sole, and yonder is 10, the number she mentioned, and there they turn in. Now walk slowly, and see which lattice opens. Ah ! there it is. We will pass close to

it, and we may know how far our company is grateful by some sign or signal."

Passing close under the window, two roses, one white and the other red, accidentally fell from the window. Konigsmark picked up the white one as emblematic of the innocence of the young girl ; whilst Isabella, taking the red one, placed it in her vest, declaring that love never offered a truer gift, and that mortal man could never feel a passion more reciprocal.

Konigsmark then advised his companion to pass by the house on the other side, as they could then see more distinctly. In front of the window was the Duenna ; whilst behind her (the light of a lamp gently falling on her features) was the young girl, whose eager eyes seemed flashing, and, with her fan raised over the head of the Duenna, the signal of pleasure was gracefully waved. Isabella saw this ; and, closing her arm more firmly in Konigsmark's, she hastened his pace.

" You seem in a hurry, Isabella, to walk away from your love."

" And you more inclined to linger with yours. Fool that I was thus to supply myself with a rival."

"A rival!" said Konigsmark, with an attempted laugh.

"Women, good Count, have keener eyes than men. I saw the motion of that fan; I understood it; I saw the quick glance of those burning eyes. Think you mine were riveted on that old fool, when, as if by instinct, I felt how I was perilling my own happiness?"

"Surely my Isabella cannot be jealous?"

"Those who love fondly and wickedly, as I love, are always jealous. Your quiet wife, believing in the sacredness of the vow expressed at the altar, may feel secure in the honour and the oath of her husband; but I have no such religious word on which to cling. No; the persuasion which overcame me may as easily overcome her; and what could I answer to this remark—'You have done the same thing; I have an equal right to his affections?' But, Count, know that the gentle Isabella is one who can revenge, and will not easily be supplanted. Come, let us return to our hotel. I will try, in the dress which best becomes my sex, to turn you from yonder enticement, and, in securing your love, save, perhaps, that poor girl's virtue."

“Always in extremes, dear Isabella. Come, then, let us go home. The noise of musquetry without ball does not sing sweetly to my ear, and those bright eyes which seem to have scared you have but little attraction for me. I thought this assumption of our sex’s attire promised you much amusement, and I regret it has given you pain. Your jealousy is, however, a compliment to me, and I receive it as such. I had intended giving those delicate ladies a serenade, and whilst you sung the Duenna to the window I should have conveyed a lesson in a song.”

“You have done that once already, dear Count. I do not forget the hint you conveyed to me in a serenade; and when you want to practise, I will sit at the window and move my fan as she did.”

CHAPTER VIII.

KONIGSMARK could neither resist an adventure nor an intrigue ; the disposition to both were inherent : of the two, he preferred war ; but, when that was denied him, he fell into love as naturally as a disappointed gamester rushes to the bottle.

The fatigues of the day, the excitement of mind and body, had been far beyond the buoyant strength of Isabella ; and a night of feverish sleep heralded only a morning of lassitude. Konigsmark's iron frame was not so easily subdued ; and, leaving Isabella in a sounder slumber than she had enjoyed during the night, he dressed himself to his greatest advantage, and forthwith sallied out. He first directed his

steps to the Calle del Sole, but no bright eyes beamed at the lattice. With the impatience of a man rushing headlong into danger, he turned towards the Cathedral: there, early as it was—for the sun had not risen an hour—were seen many, many of the poorer classes, who, before they betook themselves to their daily labour, offered up their prayers in all the sincerity of their hearts. Konigsmark watched many as they entered; it was evidently an innate sense of religion which had directed their steps. The magnificence was in the building and in the decorations of the church, not in those who came to worship. This was no fashion, which, at stated times, brings to the house of prayer, rolling in luxurious carriages, persons privileged either by rank or money to occupy conspicuous places, and to draw forth the envy of those in poorer and humbler situations—here all were equal. The old man who offered the holy water made no difference as he sprinkled it on the pauper or the prince. The chair was taken in the hands of those who came; no servant in gorgeous livery carried the seat, or, forcing aside the poorer populace, placed it in

the most conspicuous situation : no—she who came to pray, knelt upon the chair placed farthest from observation, and the breast being crossed, the lips articulated the prayer.

It was too early for sight-seeing travellers, who, regardless of the sacredness of the place, stamp through the aisles, and make their remarks upon superstition and pictures, to the insult and the annoyance of the believer. Now no melancholy Methodist scoffed at fancied idolatry, or mumbled out abhorrence at superstition and ignorance. Those who were at their devotions thus early, believed stedfastly in their creed, and bowed the head in silent reverence at the altar of their God !

This is not always the case. In Italy and in Spain, the churches are not unfrequently made the places of rendezvous ; but then it is generally later in the day, when crowds of people flock to hear some popular preacher, or when the music entices the multitude.

Konigsmark had not waited long before he remarked the entry of two women ; the long veil entirely obscured the features ; but Konigsmark was too accurate an observer of the

sex to be deceived. Donna Felipa looked anxiously round, but the younger one walked steadily forward. In a short time, a chair was placed close to that occupied by the young lady ; and, a quick observer might have remarked, that a handkerchief was dropped, apparently accidentally, and that, on its being picked up and returned to the lady, she was agitated, and careful to conceal something which was enveloped therein : a few more hurried words seemed to follow, and then Konigsmark left the church. In his haste to retire, he did not observe those by whom he was surrounded, although one fine, tall, elegant woman seemed to eye him attentively ; and, on his quitting the church, a deep, deep sigh was heard, and that form retired also. This was Isabella : so quick are women's fears and apprehensions concerning those they love, that hers had been excited by Konigsmark's conduct the previous evening, and, assuming a deep sleep, she allowed him to leave the house, and then, with all the impetuosity of jealous love, she instantly dressed as a Spanish woman, and, with the long mantilla and deep veil, she so dis-

guised herself, that she had stood near Konigsmark unobserved, had overheard the hint for the young lady to let fall her pocket-handkerchief, and had seen Konigsmark conceal a letter therein, before he returned it to its owner.

It is in women who love desperately to revenge fearlessly: the lovely Isabella, could her veil have been withdrawn, would have shown in her face the torture and anguish her mind had undergone. The man to whom she had entrusted herself, whose visions of future happiness had seduced her from the steady course which she had pursued, was now satiated with her love, and was already prepared with vows and protestations, breathing in all the warmth of apparent love and sincerity, to pour into another's ear the tide of flattery which had overwhelmed her.

Konigsmark thought little of the infidelity: with him, nurtured in all the criminality of the age, an intrigue was as common as a duel; and in both love and war he was a great proficient. Isabella loved him deeply, fondly, ardently; he was a daring, impetuous, and brave man. Women always admire such. They may have faults and foibles, but the public acknowledgment of deter-

mination is a great roller to the path of love, and smooths the way prodigiously : a literary reputation is not a bad gentleman usher ; but a warrior and a great poet march in the foremost ranks.

Konigsmark's manner did not alter ; true, he was occasionally more apprehensive that the heat of the day might be too overpowering for Isabella, when he himself walked out ; he had as many excuses for walking out as a schoolboy for escaping his lesson—and he found that which has been transmitted to our days, that the guardian of his new love favoured his views in order to gain her own. In the mean time, Isabella gradually grew more reserved in her manner ; but no look, no word of reproach, ever escaped her. Once or twice, she hinted that Madrid seemed to have more attractions for him than any other place ; but, shrinking from the subject, as if afraid of awakening his suspicions, she sighed deeply, and, taking her guitar, would hum over some melancholy Moorish song. “ I have heard,” she said one day, “ that the Spanish women frequently carry a stiletto, in order to protect themselves from insult : as you desire me to imitate

closely the costume and manners of those amidst whom we live, I should like to carry one of these, which in Italy is also common."

"It is a curious idea, my love," said Konigsmark; "and, as you *now* seldom ask for anything, which would give me, by obtaining it, the pleasure of contributing to your most trivial wants, I will take care to execute this commission to-day."

"We read much," said Isabella, "of the jealousy and savage revenge of these women."

"Yes," said Konigsmark, unconcernedly, "but it is more general in our sex than in yours; a man discovered in an intrigue seldom escapes here; the husband, or the father, or the brother, hire assassins, who are the cheapest of all murderers; and the unsuspecting victim is stabbed, either in his bed or in the street—the crime and the culprit escaping almost unnoticed. I will arm you against insult."

"Nay, nay," said Isabella, as Konigsmark rose, "I am not in such a desperate hurry to be armed that I cannot wait; besides, it is long since I enjoyed your conversation; you have been daily learning the art of defence against

the bull, so that I have no doubt I shall see you, on the 22nd, as a picador or matador."

"If I enter that arena," replied the Count, "I shall choose the most perilous place, and learn the dangers to be avoided, in order that I may justly estimate the courage of those who dare to taurise—as you, knowing the difficulties of certain passages on the guitar, are the better able to appreciate the skill of a good performer."

"This practice occupies much time, and it does appear to me that an explanation would be almost equal to a lesson; but I shall await your return with my usual patience; and hope to-night that you will allow me to accompany you in your walk in my Spanish dress, or not object to my walking alone in the disguise of yours."

"Either, either, my love," said Konigsmark; "please yourself, and I am in raptures."

Konigsmark, it is true, had once attended the slaughter houses, and had learned that coolness was the greatest requisite in these desperate amusements; that the infuriated animal always closed its eyes when it rushed at its victim, and that those most expert always

gave their bodies a certain motion, as if intending to run one way ; but that, by coolly observing when the bull closed its eyes, and then stepping the other way, the animal passed near enough for his antagonist to throw a cloak over the horns, and thus effectually blind him. But to be a good matador, the eye must correctly guide the hand in order to pith the bull, and kill him *instantly* ; that was the great *coup de maître*. This lesson-taking was but an excuse to escape from Isabella's eyes to bask in those of his new love ; and she was quite aware of it ; for, in spite of the tenderness of words, it was obvious that his ardour had cooled, and that his love was forced and constrained.

The Duenna had lent herself to the intrigue under a promise from Konigsmark that she should again see the beautiful boy who had engrossed her attention, and whose tender pressure of the hand she still remembered ; and she now kept her promise by bringing her charge to the place of rendezvous, and leaving her to listen to the dangerous tongue of the Comte.

Donna Maria was rather a small woman : her

eyes and her hair were raven black ; her mouth was perfection ; but the upper lip was generally agitated by a nervous motion, which gave the appearance of a faint smile. Her shape was faultless ; and, to judge from her hands, for in those days no Spanish woman ever showed her feet, the latter must have been diminutive. She was ignorant of the world and its ways, and equally ignorant in all useful knowledge ; believing the Spanish to be the greatest nation, and all others under its protection. She possessed the common accomplishment of the guitar, and could dance either the bolero or the cachuca. Her days had latterly been passed at the lattice, to which the Duenna had invited her ; and having no proper occupation to employ her mind, her heart was left unguarded against the impressions of love.

With idle people, love makes good its way unimpeded ; and, once established, it is not easily shaken from its throne. “ Love,” says Dr. Johnson, “ has no power over any but those it finds unemployed ;” and a more modern author* gives this wholesome advice : “ Beware

* Cecil.

of the want of excitement arising from want of occupation. It is in the unenclosed waste that the thistle wings its seeds of mischief; it is in the neglected hedge-row that the nightshade twines its deadly branches." The parent who leaves his child to solitude and idleness can only reproach *himself* should she become the victim of seduction.

Donna Maria's mind was a blank, upon which any man might have written his name. Her figure was graceful in the extreme; and the elegance of her walk, and the careless but intelligent motion of the fan, had been taught her by her Duenna. Those conversant in Spanish manners are aware that various evolutions of this female ornament convey as many meanings as the language of flowers: for this reason, no Spanish woman ever walked without one. With just sufficient education of the worst kind, and with a general lassitude of manner and idleness of habit, no one could fall an easier victim to the Comte than Donna Maria.

"No, no," she said, in a sweet, innocent voice,—for she was not yet seventeen,—“I will have no admirer but one, who, by some despe-

rate act becomes known to the public. You frequent the Court, I know ; are of high birth and good lineage. I like to listen to your adventures in other climes ; and my flesh creeps when you speak of ghosts. I must aver," she continued, " that latterly your name has been mentioned as one of the champions of our religion ; this is much in your favour, for I would not wed the Sultan if he were a heretic."

It was the very last idea ever likely to enter the Count's mind,—that of marriage ; but, with the young and uninitiated, he always advanced under that respectable garment.

" I will distinguish myself in such a manner, that all Madrid shall speak of me. If I am to be rewarded with Donna Maria's dear hand, name any event which will be most likely to occupy your or the public attention, and you shall see how readily I will court danger, if by such danger I am to gain the prize."

" I have a strange fancy," replied the simpleton, " and it is this : you must know that latterly my father has sought to marry me, and has given me the choice of one or two of our best families ; there is Don Lopez de Segovia,

who, as Donna Felipa says, is well-favoured and well-proportioned ; his teeth are white, and he lisps. There is Don Guzman d'Alcantara, stouter and stronger, with a melting eye, and great knowledge of our proverbs : they both wished to marry me ; but when I said I would not marry any man, no, not any man," and here she fixed her dark eyes upon the Count, " who would not taurise a bull on the 22nd, both said it was condemning them to certain death ; and although they could not live on this earth and see me the wife of another, yet that by killing themselves they saw no prospect of obtaining me. What think you of that, Signor Comte ?"

" Think !" replied Konigsmark, " why, that both were unworthy of you. To gain you, I would face the maddest bull that ever came from Barbary."

Donna Maria clapped her hands in ecstasy. " And do you love me so much that you would risk your life for me ?"

" What is life to me without you !" said the Count ; his intelligent eyes beaming with hope nearly gratified : " to lose you would only be

to condemn me to death ; and therefore I had better run the risk of it for the lovely object before me."

Donna Maria believed every word. Had Konigsmark volunteered to be burnt as a Jew at the next auto-da-fe, she would have credited his words. When women are prepared to believe a man, it is marvellous the extent of their credulity. "Then for me you will taurise: upon the performance of that act depends my love. I will work you a scarf of blue ; that colour is my favourite."

"And if Don Lopez or Don Guzman renew their offers?"

"I shall tell them that I have a more passionate admirer ; one who sees no danger when I am to be the reward. Oh, madam," she said, as she turned to the Duenna, "I must tell you of my good fortune: the Count is going to wear my scarf, and taurise, for the love of me ; that is delightful ! Oh, what envy and jealousy there will be throughout Madrid. There will be only the hired picadores and the butchers dressed up as matadores, but here, with my scarf of blue, and for the love of the young and

beautiful Donna Maria de Toledo, there will be a Christian champion, a real Count ! And if he should but be killed, my fame would last for ever."

" And if he survives ?"

" My hand, my heart, my love, my life, are his ! The Calle del Sole will become as public a walk as the Praça Major : and I will sit far back from the window to avoid being properly seen. There will be serenades every night ; and when I walk abroad, how thousands will vie with each other to catch a glimpse of Donna Maria's face. I am so happy. I will work the scarf directly."

" And to-morrow," said the Duenna to the Count, " I am to see your handsome young nephew ?"

CHAPTER IX.

THE principal events in this chapter have the authority of history.

Konigsmark, who had brought with him letters of introduction, and who had been well received at Court, now began to plunge into the great whirlpool of society. This was done as an excuse to leave Isabella ; and although he did attend occasionally at the palace, he never passed one evening without welcoming the beautiful Donna Maria. She soon felt an unknown glow, a thrill, a tremor, as his name was mentioned ; and, although pensive and melancholy before, lit up with spirit and animation directly.

At home, Isabella had given some hints of

jealousy ; but Konigsmark, who was well versed in the world and its ways, and who had made the female heart his study, seemed of the same opinion as that expressed by Montaigne, and never combated the feeling—" Donner des conseils aux femmes pour les degôûter de la jalousie, ce serait temps perdu : leur essence est si confite en soupçons, en vanité, en curiosité, que de les guérir par voie légitime, il ne faut pas l'esperer : " he listened, shrugged his shoulders, and left her to her only consolation—tears and solitude. At home he was now all languor, all sluggishness, but near Donna Maria he was all passion, all fire : every look and every word conveyed the burning feeling which apparently devoured him ; and if, as is said, " Les regards sont les premiers billets-doux des amants," Konigsmark had exchanged thousands with Donna Maria.

It was on the 21st of the month that Konigsmark went to the Praça Major to see the preparations for the following day ; to walk over the ground, as a good general eyes a field of battle, to remark all inequalities, to remove some loose stones, and to take as many pre-

cautions against accidents, as a good second in a duel for the safety of his principal. He surveyed with a feeling of pride the circular arena, the lower part of which was boarded up in such a manner as to secure the spectators from any fancy of the bulls to escape from their tormentors, by rushing amongst the multitude; and he carefully observed the different outlets, near which it might be requisite to retreat, if the animal pressed hard upon him.

Ladies of high birth, those of the *titulada*, had a kind of balconies set up, covered with a rich canopy, with carpets, cushions of state, and other comforts, which distinguished the haughty noblesse of Spain : * whilst bench rose over bench and seat over seat, extending the vast circumference, and making the place capable of containing eleven or twelve thousand people.

Konigsmark was not alone in his examination of the building; for careful fathers looked anxiously at the uprights which were to support the great load of human flesh and blood;

* See Countess d'Aunoy's description of this bull-fight.

and timid lovers, fearful for their mistresses, examined the barrier against the animals. This done, he retired to his house, and there found a light blue scarf, ornamented with gold spangles, and bearing a device ; having concealed this, he went to a gaming-house, and, being one of Fortune's favourites, with sufficient prudence not to tempt the goddess too far, he came back to his hotel laden with ounces of gold. Here he found his once-loved Isabella in gloomy silence in the room, but to her he did not extend many remarks. It was a day of bustling activity, and finished, as the other had done, in a declaration of eternal love and respect for Donna Maria ; with the assurance that to-morrow he would do honour to her device against the most fearful of all bulls.

The 22nd of May dawned, and a thousand hearts palpitated with hopes and fears ; none more so than Donna Maria's and Isabella's ; but from different causes : the first from the hope of obtaining her lover, the second from the fear of losing him ; both apprehensive of danger, and praying that Konigsmark might avoid it.

It was soon whispered about that the young Swede would taurise for the love of a young lady. These were days of chivalry in Spain, and every woman felt a glow of envy when the beautiful Donna Maria was named as the lady-love of this adventurous youth. Spaniards might bait bulls, and Maltese defy them, but Swedes were unknown in the arena.

The seats of this amazing amphitheatre were soon filled. The King, the Queen, and all the Court were present. The spectacle surpassed description. Thousands and thousands of the darkest eyes flashed from the loveliest women in Spain; expectation was raised beyond its common height, trumpets sounded, bands played, and loud and frequent were the "vivas."

At last the alguazils came to the gates which opened into the arena, and which were at the end of the lists, to bring forward six knights, (of whom Count Konigsmark was one,) who offered themselves to combat; loud shouts rent the air as the knights, mounted on the most superb horses, dashed into the circle. Every eye was strained towards the fair-haired Swede. All the spectators, fearful of not seeing distinctly,

rose from their seats : fans shuffled, hands were kissed, and kerchiefs waved. Then followed the grooms of the knights, each having six mounted, and leading other horses highly caparisoned ; these in their turn were followed by six more grooms, leading as many mules, covered with velvet cloth of the same colour as the dresses of the combatants, having thereon their arms embroidered in gold. These mules were loaded with lances made of dry fir, about four or five feet in length, called *rejones*, or *garochons*, highly ornamented, and tipped with iron finely polished. The sun shone bright ; and dazzling was the effect of this gorgeous cavalcade. Hearts beat quickly, and lovely faces flushed at beholding this gorgeous spectacle. “The Caballeros were dressed in black, embroidered either with gold or silver, silk or bugles ; they had white plumes of feathers spotted with several colours, and a rich kind of diamonds ; they had scarfs ; some white and others crimson, blue, and yellow, embroidered with gold,—some wore them round their waists, others over their shoulders like a belt, and others about their arms ; these last were narrow

and short.* Without doubt," this writer continues, "their mistresses presented them; for commonly they run to please them, and to show that there is no danger to which they would not expose themselves for their diversion." Over the dresses of the Caballeros, each wore a black cloak, which was thrown carelessly over the shoulders, leaving the arms free; and from the heel of small white buskins was seen the long single-pointed sharp spur, worn always by the Moors, from whom the Spaniards took the fashion: the stirrups were very short, which is also borrowed from the Moors; the long seat not having been used for many years afterwards, when grace and gentility displaced security; this short style of riding was called "Cavalgas a la Gineta."

Although the Caballeros attracted the particular attention, they being all nobly born and handsomely mounted, yet their train of attendants excited much curiosity. No less than forty footmen attended each knight, and these were all dressed as strangers; and each in the

* Madame d'Aunoy.

most exaggerated costume of the countries they represented : some were clothed in gold mohair, trimmed with lace ; others in carnation-coloured brocade striped in gold and silver ; and others in dresses equally extravagant, and equally difficult to describe ; some as Moors, Turks, Hungarians, Indians, or any other wild people.

In this manner, the cavalleros first, the mounted grooms leading horses, the mules, and then the long array of the footmen, many of whom carried also garochons, the polished iron of which glittered in the sun's rays and added considerably to the splendour, advanced. Thus they passed across the arena—the trumpets sounding, and ten thousand voices raised to their utmost pitch, shouting, “ Viva, viva, los bravos cavalleros ; ” whilst many a bright eye became dimmed, as the excitement overcame a weakness they would have repressed, for at those inhuman barbarous diversions, as with the gladiators of old, women seemed to have forgotten their sex, and to have steeled their hearts against all the finer feelings of their nature. Before blood

was shed, women appeared the divinities they are ; but with the first drop of that which constitutes life, a savage expression overcame their countenance, their hands closed with a fearful clutch, their eyes, red and dilated, seemed starting from their sockets—and a savage fury overcame the distorted features, the nostrils, like those of an angry horse, distended, to the disfigurement of the whole countenance, and all that was soft, meek, innocent, and beautiful, became hard, savage, blood-thirsty, and brutal. Pass we, from such unpleasant pictures, to the gorgeous scene before us, and let us endeavour, whilst fixing the reader's attention on the savage pastime, to withdraw his eyes from those who disgraced themselves by honouring such scenes with their presence.

The whole train having crossed the Praça Major, they were led by the six alguazils, the trumpets sounding, in front of the king's balcony, each making a low reverence to his majesty, and each, in accordance with the custom, asking permission to fight the bulls. To each the king bowed, and, giving his con-

sent, wished them "a happy deliverance"—a phrase which has been handed down to our times to inspire men with a hope that they may escape from the clutches of something infinitely more terrible to the bravest than the maddest of bulls—the law. After passing the king, the cavalleros saluted their various female acquaintances, and in this none acquitted himself more elegantly than Konigsmark ; the procession retired as it came, the arena was cleared, and the *sports* were about to begin.

At first a professional bull-baiter, one who gave lessons in the slaughter-houses, but dressed in magnificent style, exhibited to the excited spectators how coolness and dexterity made a man master of the bull ; he stood apparently unconcerned, shaking a red cloak at the animal, which at first seemed more inclined to survey the assembly than rush at the slaughterer. To goad him on to madness, some darts were thrust into him, which being followed by some fireworks, from which the hot sparks fell upon his hide, the wished for effect was produced, and the infuriated animal rushed at the bedizened butcher. Without seeming to heed

the attack, which if successful must have been fatal, the accustomed haiter, at the moment when the bull lowered its head to toss its enemy, stepped nimbly on one side, placing the cloak over the animal's horns, which, falling over his eyes, deprived him entirely of the power of attack. The poor brute, thus defenceless, was assailed by darts and fireworks ; the assembly shouted a savage yell of delight, as it endeavoured to rid itself of the cloak by shaking its head and by trampling upon the end, in which it at last succeeded, when again it rushed at its assailer, who evaded every attempt of the animal, each time thrusting a dart into its already bleeding sides, until the gentle audience began to flag in their excitement. The matador, observing this, waited the next attack, and, thrusting a sword adroitly into the nape of the bull's neck, and, in the slaughter-house phraseology, pithing it, it fell dead, rolling over from the impetuosity of the pace at which it had rushed upon its assailant. A car was driven into the arena, the dead animal was placed upon it, and, the audience loudly applauding the matador, both bull and butcher

retired. On this day Madame D'Aunoy mentions that she saw twenty bulls baited, and it was to the last that she devoted her talents of description, and at which Konigsmark (she spells the name Conigsmark) exhibited.

The six cavalleros before mentioned now galloped into the arena, each mounted on a well-trained horse. It was, in truth, a splendid sight, for they were gorgeously appparelled ; they were all handsome, young, and courageous, and one wore on his left arm a blue scarf embroidered in gold. On him one fond, excited, and beautiful girl had fixed her eyes, and he, with the lightning look which conveys more than a thousand words can adequately describe, saluted her by bowing respectfully and gracefully. Then was Donna Maria in the seventh heaven of delight—all the women near her looked at her with eyes of envy, and whispered their remarks with tongues of malice, whilst Don Lopez and Don Gusman, in accents loud enough to meet Donna Maria's ears, pitied the poor foreigner, who, although well attired, sat awkwardly on his horse, and would meet the reward of his temerity. The other knights,

having saluted the king and their respective favourites, then drew up in a line opposite to the barrier, each attended by two foot servants carrying garochons, and each gently exciting his horse to keep it lively and ready.

The trumpets blew a loud and cheering blast, the audience rose from their seats, expectation and excitement animated every eye and countenance, and one loud cheer rose in deafening roar as the barrier was removed, and six bulls, already goaded to infuriation, rushed bellowing into the arena. In a moment, each rider singled out his animal, and that animal did not refuse the contest. On rushed the bull, its tail twisting in the air, its eyes starting from its head, whilst the foam of its mouth proclaimed how near to madness had the brute been driven. The wary horseman evaded the attack, and, as the bull turned round, was quickly by its side, and thrust a garochon into its neck. The footman immediately supplied him with another, and again, amidst the cheers of the audience and sound of the trumpets, the cavallero attacked the bull. The consummate skill of the management of

the horse is here the great safeguard to the rider ; for, when the bull advances at speed, or when it turns round and round rapidly, infuriated by the pain, its sudden dart at the horse is to be evaded only by great self-command in the rider.

It was now that Donna Maria and her rejected admirers were excited ; the first held her hand firmly pressed to her heart, as if to imprison it more closely ; and the others, animated by the hope that their rival might perish, kept their eyes fixed on Konigsmark. His horse appeared restive at the moment that a bull, having at least fourteen darts in him, came rushing headlong on the Swede. The horse, which had already been grazed by a horn, seemed afraid to face the animal, and turning shortly round endeavoured to escape. A shout of derision met his ears from the mouths of Don Lopez and Don Gusman, which failed to discourage him. He allowed the horse to retreat, but by a gentle caress turned it again, and, riding close to the side of the bull, struck his dart with uncommon force into the animal. A female voice was heard above the rest, which

shouted "Bravo ;" whilst a smoother sound reached him in a familiar tone, and which uttered only "Coraggio ! Coraggio !" but it came from the part in which there were only men.

The bull darted off to another cavallero, and received a garochon in its breast, rolling over, and giving up the fight ; whilst another, fresher and less injured, attacked Konigsmark. Again, was he successful, but at the third onset, the horse not quickly obeying the rider, was gored by the bull, and literally ripped open ; neither had Konigsmark escaped, for the animal had seriously wounded his leg—the horse bore his rider clear of the affray, and then fell dead. By the laws of the bull-fight, any person, *not a Spaniard*, could, under these circumstances, retire with honour from further contest, and this was explained to the Swede, who indignantly refused, and, drawing his sword, declared he would finish on foot. Of the six bulls, only one remained alive, and this one, as if knowing the defenceless state of Konigsmark, rushed to attack him—he called to his servants to

stand aloof, and although sadly exhausted, boldly confronted his desperate enemy.

Many ladies believing that the gallant stranger was sure to be sacrificed, called out for him to retire ; whilst Lopez and Gusman, thinking now they would soon be released from a rival, shouted, when they saw the Swede place himself in a posture of defence, " Bravo, cavalero !"

The Swede, much overcome, staggered from the wound he had received and the pain it occasioned, thus getting nearer the bar, which excluded the populace. More than three times did Konigsmark evade the intentions of the bull, by stepping aside, as the ferocious beast closed its eyes, and each time did he wound it with the point of the sword, but it was evident he was not adroit enough to pith the brute. Finding his strength gradually giving way, he summoned up all his remaining force for one desperate attempt, and as the bull shyly avoided a fresh wound, Konigsmark turned towards Donna Maria, kissed the handle of his sword, and pointed to the scarf ; whilst the

excited lady waved her kerchief, and clapped her small hands. Animated and cheered by this demonstration, the Swede stood firm as the bull ran at him, and striking the animal with all his force across his eyes, stopped the impetuosity of the charge, as the sword broke close to the handle; instantly, the enraged brute turned round again, and, as the fainting Swede staggered towards the barrier, the foaming animal came rushing to his inevitable destruction. Konigsmark looked towards Donna Maria, as the whole arena began to swim around him, and he fell at the moment ten thousand "bravoes" resounded in his ear; for, when the bull was within a foot of its helpless victim, it was struck to the heart by a small dagger, wielded by a boy of the most feminine appearance. The animal fell dead, and in an instant, he who had liberated Konigsmark, turned all his attention to remove him from the arena. In the exertion, the broad sombrero fell from the head, a profusion of hair descended luxuriantly over the shoulders, and the exposed bosom, from the exertion, proclaimed a woman as the preserver of the Swede. "Es muchacha! Es muchacha!" resounded; but

to all Isabella was deaf. The servants of Konigsmark bore their fainting master to his inn, whilst the devoted girl, who had perilled her life to save her lover's, supported his head. Once, only once, she turned, and then her large black eye beheld her rival in Donna Maria, waving her handkerchief, and she almost imagined she heard the words, which prudence should have restrained : "Bravo, mi querida."

This was the best scene at the bull-bait. The bleeding animal was dragged from the arena; the king retired. Again and again, the trumpets sounded. The immense mass of people gradually dispersed; and Don Lopez and Gusman, who had attempted some ridicule upon the Swede, and who declared he must have perished, but for the improper interference of a woman, were civilly dismissed with the frozen look of disdain, as Donna Maria retired with her Duenna, saying, "He perilled his life for me; it is for me to return him, with gratitude, the compliment he has paid to my beauty, and the devotion he has shown to myself."

Konigsmark was the subject of all conversa-

tion in Madrid, so very rare was it for a stranger to venture upon these dangerous conflicts ; and, moreover, when it was whispered by the tongue of envy, hatred, and jealousy, that the beautiful Donna Maria, she who had rejected so many, had encouraged, by the promise of her hand, this daring attempt,—her ears, although gratified by thus exciting the worst feelings of her sex, were equally wounded when the sarcastic added, “ She has a rival in some servant in the Inn, who heeded not disgracing her sex by assuming the other, to save this wandering warrior—a worthy rival indeed, for the beautiful Donna Maria !”

Donna Maria was not a woman to bear a rival ; neither was the dark-haired, revengeful Isabella. The former, passionately enamoured of the man whose name was nearly European, and who was now the subject of every conversation, from the palace to the hovel, in Madrid ; and the latter, whose love had been nurtured from the first moment he had interposed to save her honour ; and who had overcome all dangers of shipwreck, and all difficulties of travelling to be by his side ; to soothe him in

his hour of anguish, and ultimately to hazard her life, to preserve his. Even now, she sat by his bed-side, endeavouring to allay the fever which threatened him ; in him were centred all her hopes in life ; she knew him to be brave and generous, and now forgot that he might be false. Generous, confiding, forgiving woman ! How true is the saying of a French writer of great celebrity, in reference to the forgiving nature of women, in contradistinction to that in men : “ *La difference de l'infidélité dans les deux sexes est si réelle, qu'une femme passionnée peut pardonner une infidélité, et être encore heureuse, ce qui est impossible à un homme.*” Isabella at this moment thought only of the restoration to health of Konigsmark ; she forgot all the latter moodiness of his temper, the number of hours he had so unusually left her alone, the scene in the church, and even the cleverness with which Konigsmark had made her assist him in his love to Donna Maria, by personating a boy, and a lover to the old Duenna, thus withdrawing the Argus eyes of the guardian from her charge, to fix them more intently upon him.

A week had elapsed since the bull-bait, and scarcely had Isabella once quitted the bed of the now convalescent Swede; she had answered all inquiries; but she had resolutely prohibited the entrance of any person, for she knew how adroitly notes were passed and intelligence conveyed. Upon the table near the bed was placed the dagger, bought for her own and used for his defence. Often and often, did Isabella take it in her hand and kiss it, and sometimes, when the gloominess of thought overcame her, the lips seemed to murmur some satisfaction that a cure for all evils was near her, and that the weapon which had preserved the life of her lover might as easily rid her of a rival. Italian revenge, is on a par with Spanish jealousy, and that has grown into a proverb; and none but Isabella knew or felt the fire which consumed her. She loved ardently, passionately, and he, the object of that affection, had risked his life in a savage amusement, for the expressed love of another!

CHAPTER X.

A FORTNIGHT passed, and Konigsmark was recovered. He had seen the devotion of Isabella : from her hands had all nourishment, all physic been taken ; all those tender endearments, all the attention to trifles, which mark the fond woman, had been lavished upon him ; and yet his desire once more to be independent of the nurse, was animated more by the hope of seeing Donna Maria than by the gratification of renovated health. It was impossible not to be grateful to so beautiful a creature ; but Konigsmark's nature was foreign to that sole, undivided love, the hope of which had so long animated Isabella's heart.

“ Let us leave this place,” she said, “ di-

rectly you are well, and return to France or Italy."

"Not I, indeed, my love; here I have made a name, and I may as well reap the benefit of it. A name in life does more than money; we are known beforehand, and all the tiresome formality of establishing an intimacy is made easy; we come, as it were, booted and spurred for the enterprise."

"And what good is to be reaped in Madrid? Is there any honour in killing a bull? if so, the butchers ought to be of the nobility."

"Honour, child, may be gained, wherever danger is to be confronted."

"Alas, Count, how badly I have understood the word! but, I would urge you to grant me one favour, and yet I know not how to ask it—excuse me, but women are quick of apprehension, and do not part with that, which has entwined itself round them, without a fearful struggle—I have no soul on earth to whom to cling but yourself; you rescued me from the Turk, and, at the risk of your life, you saved me in the shipwreck."

"And you, my gallant black-eyed beauty,

saved me from the bull—on all accounts, therefore, we are equal; what I did for you, you have returned for me; I am as much your debtor as you are mine.”

“Not so, indeed,” replied Isabella. “If you had not saved me at Malta, how must my life have continued in wretchedness, when I was to be sold; but beyond all this, is my love. I am not ashamed to own that which is natural: I have no thought but for your happiness, no wish but for your success; all that contributes to your welfare, I feel as benefiting myself. But there is one dark gloom which oppresses me—that love, which I fondly fancied mine, I feel is fast passing to another.”

“What! is my Isabella jealous? That is of all compliments the greatest.”

“I am jealous, fearfully jealous; and my days of happiness and nights of pleasure are marred by this thought, which devours me, as rust destroys iron. Cannot I see, and yet be blind? That foolish bauble of a scarf, which has been kept, like a girl’s first love-letter, for ever near your heart, is some proof that the donor is prized. And to whom did you offer your

salute on the 22nd? To whom did you look, when that look might have been your last, but to her who worked it? Yes, she is beautiful; and could calmly behold her lover sacrificing himself, and never stir to his assistance, or wave to him to withdraw; but, with the selfishness which often, I blush to say, instigates our actions, she would have seen you gored to death, or trampled upon by the enraged animal, that other women, as silly and as cold-blooded as herself, might have said, ‘*That is the girl for whom the gallant Konigsmark, the champion of Christendom, sacrificed his life in an ignominious bull-bait.*’ ”

“ Ah ! ” replied the Count, “ how more than beautiful you are when thus animated ! ”

“ Believe not I care for my beauty, but as the means of securing your heart. Alas ! it is evident there is a more beautiful woman in Madrid.”

“ None, Isabella, none comparable with you. It is true, I admire beauty wherever I see it, and then draw the comparison, and see how far inferior are all others to yourself.”

“ I can bear the comparison, and yet yield

all pretension, excepting in my warm, heart-felt devotion and love to the only man I ever loved—the only being I ever adored; and woe unto her who stands between me and the object of my affection !”

“ Poison and the dagger, my dear !” said Konigsmark, with a smile,—“ take care, lovely Isabella, or you may live to be strangled in a chair”—

“ And better that,” said the impassioned girl, as she burst into tears, “ than bear a rival near your heart.”

“ That thunder-storm,” said the Count to himself, “ will somewhat cool the atmosphere. Women get wonderful relief from their eyes ; whilst through those orbs, they cause us all our pain. That girl somewhat annoys me by the excess of her love ; it is a sufficient misfortune to have any one legally linked to you ; but one who is not gives all the inconvenience without any of the benefits. I will avail myself of this burst of grief to walk through the Calle del Sole.”

For many days had Donna Maria anxiously watched at the window. In Spain, this is com-

mon, and does not derogate from the fair fame of the lady; it is a privileged lounge, where, ensconced from the intruding eye, and by means of a looking-glass, affixed outside of the window, all that passes in the street can be discerned, whilst the observer is partially concealed. How her heart throbbed when she saw the Count—his eyes fixed upon the window—his pace quickened, and anxiety upon his countenance; and, with what feminine cunning did she agitate her fan, and turn from the glass, as if she had not seen him, though every moment seemed lengthened into an hour, until he passed the lattice, where she *now* was busy knitting, and apparently engaged solely in that most monotonous of all melancholy employments. She raised her eyes as he passed, and ejaculated a sudden “Ah!” as if much surprised; and giving a tender look of acknowledgment, took her fan, and implied, by means of that useful telegraph, that the Praça Major would not be deserted that night.

Even this walk had not escaped Isabella; neither had the signal. Dressed as an old woman, and limping in her gait, she had

watched Konigsmark with all the jealousy of wounded affection. She perfectly understood the signal ; for the duenna had instructed her, that when the fan was held as high as the forehead, and reversed, so as to fan the face, it conveyed the magic word " come ; " whereas, the quick motion of this apparently innocent implement, played with carelessly, being opened and shut with rapidity, as if for pastime, implied, " take no notice of me ; " and the French semaphore itself, with its one arm, never conveyed a more explicit code of signals.

In Spain, a knowledge of its proverbs constitutes education, and the happy application of them, wit. In a lady, the guitar and a few boleros are accomplishments ; but the fan is deep erudition ; and it requires more time than the knowledge of music, to acquire so easy and elegant a manner of wielding it as to escape suspicion that it is meant for a signal.

It was a cool evening, after a warm morning, and Isabella, dressed as a boy, accompanied Konigsmark to the Praça Major. Both duenna and Donna Maria were there ; the former charmed to see her lover, the latter

equally so to see the man to whom she had destined her hand in honourable marriage. Donna Maria was only eighteen, and at that age the Spanish women are more forward than those of riper age in England ; naturally warm in their temperament, they love ardently, and feel deeply. Pride is the great safeguard of a woman's virtue, and Spanish pride has grown into a proverb. Hence all the security which nature can bestow upon woman had been bestowed upon Donna Maria ; for, with the above shields, she was still further protected by religion. That she was vain, was merely to say she was a woman ; and all the pleasure she derived from Konigsmark's conversation was the natural result of ignorance, listening to the novelties and stirring scenes of real life from lips it loved ; and when that man, whose name was on every tongue at Madrid, perilled his life, and very nearly lost it for her, she became desperate, and would have braved parental authority to obtain the foreigner's hand. Young ladies of such temperament never think that money is requisite to happiness, or believe

that the introduction of poverty would be the dismissal of love.

The old Duenna was pleased with the attention of her young admirer ; and Isabella, having formed her plan, found admiration of the aged of her own sex the best means of carrying it out. In prosecuting this scheme, full time and opportunity was given to Konigsmark to pour into the willing ears of his admiring listener the tender tale of affection, the warmth of his love, the sincerity of his attachment. We have said the Swede was a proficient in the art, and Ovid could not have taught him more than is comprised in the following :—" *Les passions sont les seuls orateurs qui persuadent toujours ; elles sont comme un art de la nature dont les regles sont infaillibles ; et l'homme le plus simple qui a de la passion persuade plus que le plus éloquent qui n'en a point.*" With all the fervour of this eloquence did Konigsmark pour the continued tide of warm expressions into the ear of Donna Maria, and she as readily received and retained them. With all the devotion of her sex, she acknowledged her attachment, her

love ; and, in the belief that each word of her admirer was an honourable declaration, she felt that a privileged intimacy might exist with the man to whom she was so soon to be united. Then she mentioned, with a conviction that she could overcome it, (so blind is hope,) her father's objection to any but a Spaniard ; and also the certainty that the Duenna would favour her views, and aid her to overcome the prejudices of her parent.

Donna Maria had no mother. Her father was one of the most enthusiastic gamblers in Madrid ; and not an evening passed that he did not seek the excitement now become requisite to him.

Isabella had succeeded in obtaining from the Duenna a promise to admit her into the house when the father went to his favourite haunt and Konigsmark had urged Donna Maria to grant him the same privilege ; this produced a hurried conversation between the two ladies, which finished by the Duenna, after having most positively refused consenting, solely to relieve the anguish of her charge's mind, and out of the purest love and friendship for her,

to allow of this visit, but only for this evening. This point gained,—it being one that all wanted, and yet that each was unwilling his neighbour should know,—the ladies retired to the Calle del Sole; and Isabella, as being almost unknown, was placed to watch the egress of Don Emanuel, whilst Konigsmark, obliged to make some return for the frequent inquiries which had been made, commenced some hasty visits, to express his acknowledgment, and to show himself, as boxers do after a prize-fight.

No sooner did Don Emanuel leave the house, than Isabella entered. The Duenna gave the signal with the fan, and with all the caution of a timid girl herself admitted her lover. The shades of evening had now overcast the day, and night began to wear its dark mantle; at the window sat Donna Maria; whilst on a sofa, entirely obscured from sight, sat Isabella and the Duenna. They held their amorous conversation in low impassioned whispers; the volubility of the Duenna—for she made love to Isabella—being as astonishing as the silence of the Italian—it was taken for youthful modesty and timidity, and rendered the boy-lover doubly admired.

At last the Duenna rose to order some coffee and liqueurs ; and Isabella, touching Donna Maria on the shoulder with a familiarity which made the proud Spaniard start, she began :—

“ Is it true you have confessed your love for the Swede ?”

“ It is a question,” replied the haughty girl, “ that none but a parent or a lover has a right to ask.”

“ Yes,” continued Isabella, “ there is another who has a right, and who does demand it.”

“ Your manner is rude, sir. Your friendship with Don Carlos (for so she called Konigsmark) is your privilege, which on this occasion you somewhat overstep.”

“ And you, proud lady, may yet thank me for the abrupt manner which seems so unpalatable. I ask if you love him.”

“ And why that question ?”

“ Because you have a rival, who, to retain his affections, would do a deed which would keep Don Emanuel from the gaming-table, and close this house in darkness and grief.”

“ Retain !” said Donna Maria, catching only at that word, and disregarding the more omi-

nous ones—" *Retain!* why, who possesses them but myself?"

"Your love has blinded your reason. When, at that disgraceful exhibition where noblemen attempted to rival butchers, the Swede was overcome from his wound and fatigue, and when his death was inevitable from the trampling of the enraged animal, to whom did he pledge that last kiss upon the cross of his sword?"

"To me," replied Donna Maria.

"Did you, at that dreadful moment, start from your place, to save this object so much prized?"

"It is against the laws of the bull-fight."

"Does an enamoured woman think of laws when her lover is in danger? We have read of a mother who rushed into a tiger's jaws to save her child from being devoured. History may yet record the devotion of a daughter who would drink human blood to save her parent; and fathers have feigned sleep, to remain for execution and save their sons; but can one pretend to love, and see the man she loves on the point of being trampled to death, and coolly wave her handkerchief, and quote the law as a

reason for her cowardice ? He ventured his life for you."

" His reward being my hand, which many have requested."

" And which now I request for another."

" It is said, ' friendship is dear in every-thing save in the office and affair of love ;' but yours is a strange request, for me to act against your friend."

" I ask it to save yourself,—to save him."

" Is there anything so poisonous in my breath that he need fear infection ?"

" You may fear your rival. Who was it that, at the hazard of her life, interposed her dagger to save him from the bull ? Think you such a woman would hesitate to rid herself of a more formidable enemy ? But is not Spanish pride a proverb ? Then how is it that the beautiful Donna Maria, the wonder of Madrid,—she who has nightly serenades from the first cavalleros of the capital,—could condescend to be the rival of an Italian whose birth is unknown ; who was brought up amongst robbers and ruffians, and rescued from the seraglio of a Turk, and who is now with him, she having

been saved from shipwreck by this adventurous Swede. That woman it was who, owing him her life, saved his ; and who, to preserve him, would use the same dagger with less fear of danger. Spaniards are jealous, Italians are revengeful. Refuse him admittance, and discard him, or it were wise to let your confessor shrive you. This is my act of friendship to you and to him, which might save you from death, and him from occasioning the crime."

" My word is pledged,—my pledges are sacred. I asked him to come to me. Be it right or be it wrong, I love him. But I will ask him of this woman."

" The question might be better directed to me. Hear me, Donna Maria ; you who are so favoured by nature, listen to the urgent request of Count Konigsmark's dearest, best friend. Here, on my knees, I entreat you," and Isabella knelt before her dark-eyed rival.

At this moment, the Duenna, who was bringing in the coffee herself, in order that no prying eyes should see, and no babbling tongue betray her indiscretion, gently pushing the door open with her foot, saw her supposed admirer at the

feet of her charge. She stood still; her blood forsook her wizened cheeks, and indignation gave a brighter scintillation to her eye.

"Here, on my knees," continued Isabella, "I implore you, for my, for your own sake, relinquish all idea of the Count, and give me the greater joy." Here, the old lady, entirely overcome, her hopes blighted, her love despised, dropped the tray, cups, saucers, and liqueurs, and, falling upon a sofa near at hand, went into violent hysterics. Startled at the sound of the china, both Isabella and Donna Maria rushed hastily to the Duenna's assistance, whilst a gentle sound, somewhat between a whistle and a word, was heard in the street.

"It is the Count," said Isabella, seizing her rival's hands. "Let me implore you, hear not the sound—or, hearing, do not heed it."

"I wish I could but quiet the sound of the Duenna's cries and laughs."

"Speak to her severely; do not attempt to soothe her; that will soon pass. Your greater danger is nearer to you than that old fool. Again, I ask you not to admit the Count."

"All my promises are sacred. Even if my

father interposed, it should not turn the current of my love. Let but Don Carlos say ‘*come*,’ and I would obey the summons, although thousands opposed me.”

“And yet, one moment’s conversation would turn such a wavering girl as I believe you to be ; other promises would be made, and even the man devoted to you would be sacrificed and forgotten, your love epistles given up, and every word written in confidence, and in all the glowing animation of fondness, made the sport of public ridicule.”

“Why, now you urge me to keep my promise.”

“I urge you to relinquish that which you have not courage to maintain. Hark ! again, there is the signal. Before he is admitted, this old woman must be calmed.”

“Methinks, for one who seemed so kind, your words regarding her are not those of much fondness.”

“Before we part this night, you will not believe me very sincere in my affections as regards her ; and, perhaps, may not be more enraptured with me yourself. Once more, admit him not.”

“I am resolved he shall not taunt me with

wavering, in spite of all you have said ; ay, even of the fear you would occasion of my rival. I have given my promise, and that promise shall be sacred. As she said this, she opened the door, and Konigsmark, somewhat excited, from the time he had waited, entered. Donna Maria pointed to the Duenna, who still continued laughing and crying, one moment wishing to caress, and the next declaring her aversion to Isabella. She was left to cure herself ; for no sooner had Konigsmark led the willing Donna Maria into the adjoining room than Isabella cautiously left the house.

Don Emanuel had, for a wonder, that night, neither experienced the frowns nor the smiles of fortune : he was not over-anxious to continue, when he could neither win nor lose ; and, as he sat musing, and scarcely regarding the dealer, who slowly drew the cards from the pack one by one, to the excessive excitement of others, either more or less fortunate, a note was placed in his hand, and before he could turn to make any inquiries, the deliverer of the letter had mixed in the crowd which always surrounds a gaming-table.

Don Emanuel found that it contained but a few words—"Whilst you are ruining yourself at the gaming-table, your daughter's ruin is being consummated at home." He started up instantly, and retraced his steps, closely watched by a young lad. He was a man of many words, for a Spaniard—haughty and sun-burnt; a little, bustling personage, of some weight in politics; known to the court, and very rigid in morals. Besides, he was a stanch friend of the church and the inquisition, and thought nothing more laudable than burning a Jew, or garotting a violator of female chastity. Coming near his house, he kept close to the wall, and passed unnoticed beneath the lattice. There was no occasion to have been so guarded; but Don Emanuel was a prudent man, and carefully avoided observation in all his actions. He turned beneath his portico, and, heaving a deep sigh, as men sometimes do when they imagine an evil, he pushed against the private door, and, to his astonishment, found it open. Isabella had done this, to re-enter herself.

Don Emanuel, thinking that he might have to call the police, left the door unclosed; and Isa-

bella, admitting herself, remained concealed, until by the glare of the light which came from the room in which the Duenna had alarmed her friends, she saw Don Emanuel upon tip-toe gently enter the apartment. His eyes turned towards the sofa, and there, exhausted by her long fit, the elderly Duenna had fallen asleep. A curtain only separated the rooms; but those who talk of love have ears only for each other's words: eyes meet eyes, each change of countenance is remarked; to all other things, the ear and the eye are deaf and blind.

Don Emanuel gained the curtain; distinctly overheard a man's voice, who, in broken Spanish, was endeavouring to convey to a most willing ear the truth and ardour of his love. Intent upon listening, before he proceeded to murder, he never heeded the noise which Isabella occasioned by awaking the Duenna; but when that gentle maid awoke from her slumber, she was silenced by Isabella's small hand upon her mouth, and she heard whispered by the voice she loved, "Be cautious, fairest creature; Don Emanuel is in this room, listening to

Count Konigsmark's declaration of love to his daughter." The old lady cautiously raised herself up, and there, bewildered in affright, she perceived the mantle of Don Emanuel, which seemed agitated by the agitation of its wearer; and now the right arm was moved, and forth from its scabbard came a bright sword. The Duenna, unable to control her fears, screamed loudly to Donna Maria to avoid the blow; and, rushing upon Don Emanuel, she threw her arms around him, calling out, "You would not kill your daughter!"

The Duenna's scream might have passed for a return of hysterics; but the word "daughter" startled Donna Maria, who, leaving Konigsmark's knee, on which she had been seated, his arm having supported her, by being entwined round her waist, advanced like a heroine, her eyes sparkling and her hands outstretched, whilst Konigsmark, stepping back a pace, drew forth a long and greedy rapier, and stood upon his guard.

"Before you strike, father, hear my explanation. I have accepted Count Konigsmark as my husband."

"Accepted the devil!" roared the indignant Spaniard. "Men who bait bulls, never marry. Adventurers and voyageurs, coming from unknown lands, come not for wives. Untwist your old, wizened arms, thou hag of hatred, and let me take vengeance on the violator of my child's honour."

"Carlos! Carlos!" said the daughter, "lift not your arm against my father; I will not believe in your love, if you strike him."

Konigsmark stood beautifully erect; his fine, piercing eye shone like a star. He had thrown aside his mantle, disdaining to use it as a defence, by twisting it round his left arm, and placing it before him to receive the thrust, as shields of former days were opposed to the blow; his hand held forth the rapier with untrembling nerve, and the bearing of the man was that expressed by the poet—

"Love and war take turns, like night and day,
And little preparation serves for each——"

Never did a man present a bolder front or a more unflinching resolution; it came natural to him: his life had been one scene of dan-

gerous adventure ; and his eye had never quailed to any apprehension.

“ Hear me,” said the Duenna. “ Would you make a scandal of your own child ?—would you, her father, blazon forth her indiscretion ? Be discreet ; allow the Count to retire, and wisely hush it up.”

“ And am I to lose my love also ?” said Isabella. “ Will you desert me ?”

“ Another !—St. Jago de Compostella !” ejaculated the Spaniard. “ Are you also, young lad, assured of the Duenna’s love ? Her advice, however, is good ; I will be discreet. You, no longer my daughter, shall retire to a convent ; and you, sleepy guardian of my child’s virtue, may find another employment.”

“ I warned you beforehand,” said Isabella to Maria. “ Now learn from this an Italian’s vengeance. I am the woman—[the Duenna shrieked and fell,]—rescued by your Carlos from a treble death ; and this dagger, which felt the wild, throbbing heart of the bull, had found a nobler one in my rival, had not I felt assured that, closely immured in a convent, not even the fan of Donna Maria could convey



a signal. I gave you the chance of your father's determination—mine was made up."

"I am ready to offer any satisfaction," said Konigsmark.

"Your absence will be the greatest," replied the Spaniard.

CHAPTER XI.

As Don Emanuel sheathed his sword, Konigsmark returned his to the scabbard, and, taking his mantle, threw it carelessly over his shoulders. For a minute he surveyed Donna Maria, who, now paralysed by her father's presence, did not dare to return his gaze, but, as Isabella had predicted, shrunk from her lover's to her father's protection.

"I have," said Konigsmark, "clandestinely entered your house, Don Emanuel ; my love for your daughter urged me to this ; I owe you any reparation you may demand, and shall await at my hotel any message you may send."

"I feel infinitely obliged," replied the Spaniard, "for your kind consideration. I am

no tidings, nor do I think she has ever landed direct from Messina, at Naples, as I made myself acquainted with the captains of the various vessels from that port, and cannot discover that any lady of her description came passenger. I pray God she may have escaped all perils, for my heart is much hers, and my life at her command. Moreover, it doth appear that one answering to her description and age was stolen from the Castle of Count Manfredi, when some Calabrian brigands by stratagem, and when the Count was absent, obtained admission, sacked the castle, murdered one or two of the domestics, and stealing the Count's only child, retired in security. It is said the Count, who is very wealthy, has offered large sums for the discovery of his daughter, and failing therein, he retired to his castle, and has given himself up a prey to melancholy—so much so, as to be somewhat considered mad by his retainers and dependents. They say the child had certain marks about her which might lead to the discovery. My time being expired, I left letters for the Signora Isabella, with directions to one who keeps an hostel near the bay,

Jozé Vergani, diligently to inquire of her arrival, and to make her acquainted with my information, which might, by the blessing of the Virgin, restore her to her aged father. At Paris, I called at the Embassy, and was much questioned concerning you ; and the Colonel did say that, if you were now in England, you might be the richest man in it, for that a bird with golden wings had lost its mate ; but, these words being quite unintelligible to me, I made no inquiry as to their import. On my arrival in London, I lost no time in prosecuting my inquiries concerning the Lord Ogle, who was after his marriage called Lord Percy. It was but to secure the money that the wedding with that child took place, for, from that day to the day of his death, which occurred a fortnight previously to my arrival in England, he had never seen her. They say it would be indecent in the child to be married again directly, but that several people are already making propositions, as she is enormously rich. I shall await your arrival with much anxiety, and would be much obliged by some further remittance, for I am somewhat in want of

money, and may perchance have to remain longer than my slender credit would warrant. Your faithful servant until death—VRATZ.”

This letter decided Konigsmark’s plans. He had little to gain by remaining in Madrid, and scandal, with its stentorian lungs, might circulate that which could do him no good, and might injure the fair fame of a beautiful lady.

Isabella remarked that his face had bled ; and, though the Count had bestowed more than usual attention on his toilet, he wore a look of much care, and seemed somewhat uneasy ; he affected to be otherwise, and brightened into excitement as he conversed with the Italian.

“I have news for you, dear Isabella, which will interest you much. I have reason to believe that Vratz has discovered some clue to your parents. I have no secrets from you. Read this. Ah ! I forgot it was in the Swedish language ; I will translate it to you.”

It was strange, but doubts flitted fast over the brain of the Italian. Before her arrival at Madrid, Konigsmark might have convinced her with a kiss of any fact ; now jealousy had diffused its venom, and all the delightful sensa-

tion of credulous and impassioned love had changed this vision, as the poet says, "corroding every thought, and blasting all love's paradise." Still she listened with much interest, although she doubted the truth of the translation.

"And what do you propose to do in reference to that story of Vratz?"

"I think, dear girl, the best thing which we can do is instantly to leave Madrid and pass to Barcelona; there I will embark you for Naples, supplying you amply with funds. On your arrival there, you could make inquiries of the person mentioned by Vratz, Jozé Vergani, and by stratagem obtain an interview with the Count. I have heard it said that a parent always feels some yearning of affection when a lost child appears before him. You look with a sinister expression of countenance, as if you suspected something."

"I suspect, Charles, what I dare not say. Why did you last night leave the house? and how came your dress torn, with spots of blood, as if some serious conflict had taken place? And now, the very morning following a de-

claration of love to another, and I suspect more than a declaration, you urge me to leave you—to traverse the Mediterranean, an unprotected woman—to throw myself upon the wit, judgment, and honour of a Neapolitan hotel-keeper on the quay, who, knowing my errand, might keep me a close prisoner, until he had by extortion raised a large sum from my father, before he restored me to him.”

“An Italian is always jealous and suspicious.”

“And revengeful,” interposed Isabella. “Had I failed in my plan last night, you would have had no occasion to return to that house about eleven o’clock.”

“When will this anxiety cease?”

“When there is no further occasion for it.”

“If I leave Madrid with you”—

“You will return to it the instant I am imprisoned in the ship—her anchor weighed—her sails loose, and each moment going farther from Spain. Methinks, one so tender of his charge might cross to Naples, and having restored a poor unfortunate creature to the affections of her parents (although she would ten

thousand times rather cling only to her present protector), return through France to whatever country he might desire to visit. I fear I am not now so interwoven with your heart."

"You are unjust, as you are ungenerous Isabella. I shall part with you with the most poignant regret; it is a duty I owe you, if possible, to re-establish you in your father's fortune and affections; and hereafter we may meet again, and under more propitious auspices."

"Only see me to Naples; give me your advice and assistance to regain my position, and then I may part with you for a few months; not with less regret, but with the hope of again being yours—without becoming a burthen upon your liberality."

"Generous creature!" said Konigsmark. "This I would do, were I not by the contents of Vratz's letter summoned to England."

"I heard no summons as you read the letter."

"Did you not hear that Lord Percy was dead?"

"And what influence can his lady have on your movements?"

"*She is the star of my destiny.*"

"I should have thought, from the lateness of your last night's ramble, that the beautiful, but wavering Donna Maria was that star. But I presume, you have those in both hemispheres."

"This unfounded jealousy can neither move me to anger nor to argument. This day we leave Madrid for Barcelona. I have already arranged my affairs; do so with yours."

"Am I to travel in the dress I arrived in, or in that more becoming my sex?"

"As a woman. In one hour, I shall have hired mule-drivers and mules, and before noon—without a visit, which I scarcely expect, from—from—"

"Don Emanuel, perhaps," interrupted Isabella.

"No; your friend, the Duenna."

"I thought you were going to say—the king, the one being just as probable as the other."

"This bantering is useless, and your jealousy is childish."

“ Say not, Charles, it is childish. Is it not evident that your intention is now to leave me at Barcelona, and return to Madrid ? If some most powerful influence did not operate upon your mind, would you, the chivalrous Charles John Von Konigsmark, leave one, to whom you have plighted your faith, to make good a claim, which your very evidence is necessary to substantiate ?”

“ As how, beautiful Isabella ?”

“ I pray you cease your compliments ; they are ill-timed. As thus, my own story accounts for my detention in Greece—the marks prove me to be the child—your evidence of my rescue from the Turks, and companionship with you, carries me to the very hour when my father will see me. Have I not sacrificed all a woman holds dear in the world to you ? and, be not deceived, I do not regret it ; I would do it again. I cannot reproach you with causing my unhappiness, for before I saw you, I never had one moment's real happiness ; since I have known you, I have had many, many hours of unalloyed felicity ; nay, every hour makes me feel how necessary you are to

my existence ; but I will be no clog on your movements ; leave me under my father's roof, or leave me here."

" Here ! that would be madness."

" It would be the madness which kills. An Italian's revenge once gratified, and Isabella would break the last tie which binds her to life ; but she who has estranged me from him I love and adore, shall not long live to enjoy her triumph. I thank you for the present of that weapon which has already saved your life, and shall administer to my revenge."

Isabella's beautiful countenance became more beautiful, from the animation which illumined it ; her large dark eyes sparkled, and her upper lip moved in nervous trembling—there was a fearful, fixed resolve so engraven on her features, that no child could have mistaken the savage determination which burned within her. Konigsmark fixed his grey quick eye upon hers, but it could not daunt her ; and that look, which at other times would have caused her eyes to shrink under the cover of the long fringe, to shade them from the glance, now uselessly shot forth its lightning.

“ Am I not married to you,” she said, “ as far as we ever can wed ? have we not sworn before heaven, with the sun for our witness, that we are so united ? and would you not have gone through the ceremony of the holy church, but that she denied one of her daughters to any who have risen against her ? According to that church and our religion, I cannot be your legal wife. It is called a holy ordinance, and yet it cannot be universal. I feel satisfied with my own position, but I will not allow another to usurp my dominion over your heart small as it now appears. I shall be ready at noon, and I trust to your honour, ay, the honour of Charles John Von Konigsmark, not to desert me.” She looked proudly at the man a woman’s words had shaken ; but no sooner had he left the room, than she burst into tears.

That day at noon, and carefully avoiding the Calle del Sole, Konigsmark and Isabella left Madrid. The travelling was slow, and the road dangerous. Konigsmark rode armed ; more like a man traversing an enemy’s, than a friendly country ; and Isabella, somewhat re-

lieved from her depressing feeling as to Konigsmark's intentions, became more cheerful as she retired further and further from the capital, and felt once more that he whom she loved in all tenderness and affection was still by her side. The vision of Donna Maria grew less and less indistinct ; and in her rapture, she heeded not either the country through which she passed, or the figures of two women who rode rapidly by them, and in spite of the oppressive heat, seemed anxious to make the best of their way.

Thirty miles English was a 'long day's journey in those times, and in Spain there were few comfortable abodes for the night ; a miserable posada supplied an apology for a bed ; and those travellers who required something beyond the friolas and eggs, carried with them their provender. Konigsmark did that ; and as the evening closed in, gladly availed himself of rather a clean looking posada, where they passed the night. At daylight, they were again on their long way towards the Mediterranean. During the heat of the day, they always reposed for two hours ; and when the lengthening shadows marked its de-

cline, the jaded horses, conscious that their work was nearly done, seemed to increase their pace. Other travellers were on the same track ; but on the approach of various parties, each might be seen getting ready for a fight, each doubtful of the other's honest intentions, and neither very solicitous of any intercourse. The manner of defending the neck from the heat of the sun, by means of a handkerchief fastened to the hinder part of the hat, gave a very roguish appearance, and fatally destroyed the proud bearing of a high-bred cavallero ; moreover, it was common in those days, as it is somewhat now the case, never to shave, and to be very shy of water during any journey ; so that after two or three days' progress, the highest man in the land dwindled down to the appearance of the most inveterate unshorn, unwashed creature in creation. Travellers in those days were shot first, and plundered afterwards, it being a proverb that "dead men told no tales," neither did they offer any resistance ; hence, travelling after dark was avoided. Neither was it very uncommon for those who started first in the morning to find

the body of some murdered man, the ground moist with the blood, and footsteps deeply imprinted, as of some desperate struggle. It fell to the duty of those to raise a small cross, whilst the body of the plundered and murdered victim was left until some one more charitably disposed, and whose time was less precious, or whose poverty protected him from similar treatment, felt inclined to bury the mangled remains. Again Konigsmark and Isabella halted for the night.

CHAPTER XII.

THERE was a restlessness unusual to Konigsmark on his arrival at the posada. He mingled in low and hurried conversation with the people ; before this time, his pride was the guardian of his tongue, and he never herded with the vulgar. To Isabella's inquiries as to his conversation, she was always answered that he was endeavouring to find out the state of the roads, and the country through which they had to pass, as not unfrequently it became requisite to remain a whole day at the posada ; but there was an insincerity in his speech—there was something unusual—which was uselessly attempted to be concealed from a jealous woman.

On arriving at Barcelona, a small felucca

was found, which in the course of a few days was to sail to Naples ; and although hope pictured to Isabella her restitution of rights, her almost certainty of becoming the heiress of the Manfredis, and the independence inseparable from birth and wealth, yet she felt fearful lest in gaining all these, she might lose Konigsmark ; and if held in the balance, all the brilliant prospects of the future would be light in consideration with the Swede's affection. He was a kind, fearless, desperate, enthusiastic man,—and women ever love such. The arrogant, self-sufficient, timid man has but a poor chance of happiness in marriage ; he becomes too occupied with himself to shield, protect, or amuse his wife ; but the nobleness of the character of the Swede warranted affection in overlooking some slight indiscretions. She loved him more warmly and passionately since she had saved his life in the arena at Madrid ; and now that her jealousy on account of Donna Maria had been awakened, she felt that in tearing him from her heart, she would yield up, not only every happiness in life, but also her own existence.

Konigsmark was restless at home ; he ever wanted either to provide things for the voyage, or to make arrangements on board, and Isabella, left to herself, began to distrust him. Exchanging her boy's dress for the rougher costume of the Catalonians, she resolved to watch her lover, and having dressed herself in that garb, she concealed it by means of a long dressing-gown ; and, carefully employed in preparing for embarkation, the pre-occupied Swede failed to discover anything unusual, and left the inn.

It was nearly dark ; and the badly-lighted streets afforded an almost sure defiance against discovery ; but not a moment elapsed before Isabella, in her new dress, with a large cloak thrown over her shoulders, and with a huge brown beaver hat well placed over the forehead, was on his track. Who can evade a jealous woman ?—their eyes are quicker than the beasts of prey, and with untiring zeal they follow up their pursuit.

Konigsmark having passed rapidly from street to street, at last came upon the port, and took a direction exactly opposite to that where the

felucca was at anchor ; here, leaning on a post to which divers hawsers and ropes to secure vessels were made fast, he whistled a Spanish air ; and directly, a very sweet voice sang the same refrain. How beautifully and softly that sweet intonation fell upon the ear ; and, fortunately, it soon stopped, or it would have enticed more listeners than would have been convenient. About five minutes elapsed, when a female landed close to the spot where Konigsmark stood, and being instantly enveloped in a cloak, and taking Konigsmark's arm, they walked away, skirting the shore in the direction of the celebrated bluff point, on which at this day stands the fortification of Montjoye.

With a heart palpitating for revenge, and with feelings most deeply wounded, the beautiful Isabella slowly and cautiously dogged their steps, until, arriving at a stone seat, Konigsmark, holding the woman's hand in his, began in an impassioned strain to pour out all his soul into the willing ears of Donna Maria, who, the night previous to his leaving Madrid, he had persuaded to leave her father's roof, and with him roam the world. Accustomed to win

women easily, from his courage and address, he was also accustomed to leave and forget them when satiated. His was a world of novelty,—a young heart seared, callous to all supplications; selfish in the extreme; caring for no suffering in others, as long as he himself was gratified. Artful, enterprising, enthusiastic, and resolved, few, if any, escaped his artifices; and his greatest success was owing to his apparent openness, his plausibility, and his knowledge of the female heart. Even now he swore by the stars which shone at this happy meeting, never to leave Donna Maria; but that having embarked Isabella, and accompanied her out of the bay, it was his intention to slip from the stern into a boat, and forthwith return to her.

With feelings more easily imagined than described, Isabella overheard every word. She had crept cautiously near the seat, and with the stiletto in her hand, meditated the revenge she had threatened at Madrid. This was a plan deeply laid, well considered, and arranged; to bribe the captain to continue his course was easily done; and once in the boat, and the felucca, with her canvas spread to the breeze,

cutting her way through the smooth sea, how could Isabella have ever regained either her lover, or the shore on which the perfidious man had landed. Then it was that all Isabella's suspicions as to the last night at Madrid were confirmed ; and then, for the first time, she became aware that the man she so desperately loved was unfaithful to her. Suspicions she had, but the certainty was now before her ; she was to be rejected for her rival, and for that rival who would never risk her life to save his. She overheard the words of affection which came at the speaker's bidding ; she felt the very passion those words were calculated to arouse, and she could almost fancy the dear voice which before had met her ears, conveying nearly the same protestations, could only be for her. Alas ! another answered them ; another who, to fly from a convent, had consented to embark for Sicily, and, leaving all the ties which bind children to their parents, entrust herself with Konigsmark *for ever* ! She might yet have to learn how short a time those words embraced, when uttered by such perfidious lips. For an hour, this conversation continued : the words

“for ever” seemed always present to Isabella. How often had he sworn to love her for ever!—and now the same words were destined to deceive another.

In the meantime, the stars—Konigsmark’s ever ready witnesses for his love—began to be obscured, and the whistling of the wind through the rigging of the various vessels announced a strong increase of the breeze. Now one or two large drops of rain—the heralds of millions—fell. It were better for Donna Maria to regain her vessel, from which she had walked on a slender plank; this vessel was fastened to the shore, and the plank led to a platform which ran some fathoms into the water. Konigsmark had placed her here to escape detection, should her father have followed her; and here, also, she was safe from the quick eyes of Isabella.

“For myself,” said Konigsmark, “I care not for the rain or the storm, but for you, dearest, it might be of greater consequence. I will see you to-morrow: and now, one kiss, and good night.” That last appeal was heard by Isabella; she watched them as they

returned to the quay, and with a breaking heart, sank upon the stone upon which both had been seated. Here, her first burst of grief over, she communed with herself upon her favourite topic, revenge. For some time, she wavered upon whom that revenge should fall ; but she clung with the fidelity of a woman to the man she loved ; and she turned her fertile imagination into a thousand different plans how to save him and sacrifice her. Perhaps the early scenes of her life, when the Calabrian bandit drew the knife, and unceremoniously stabbed, might have made her less sensible to deeds of blood, for she had often seen it flow ; and that revenge which she had nurtured from her youth upwards, and which captivity or the harem could neither tame nor subdue, suggested itself without a shock to her mind.

Konigsmark had returned home, and her absence would be detected ; this might be considered by him as a proof of inconstancy, and grasped at as an excuse to shake her off. Donna Maria was evidently the ascendant star, to be dismissed when another should be unfortunate enough to attract his attention. She

sat musing on the stone, watching the dark clouds as they rapidly passed over the moon. The wind was fast increasing, and the quick rain had dwindled into a foggy drizzle. There was not a soul upon the quay to which the feluccas were fastened, and the splash of the increasing swell of the sea failed to alarm the sleeping crews of the increasing storm. It was near midnight, and with the exception of some voices occasionally heard in the direction of the town, and the howl of the wind, all was silent. Suddenly leaving her seat, the desperate girl walked to the plank, and with steady step, arrived on board the felucca. There was no watch kept, although forward, rolled up in a huge grego, which sheltered its inmate from the rain, the man to whom the guardianship had been devoted, slept unconscious of the intrusion of the stranger ; nor was that better guardian of all vessels, the faithful dog, on board the Santa Theresa. Isabella's footfall was as light as the snow-flake, as she unhesitatingly descended the companion ; with cautious hand, she turned the handle of the door, and stood within the same space as her

rival. She was there and asleep ; her beautiful face rosy in slumber ; her mouth slightly open ; whilst her quick-heaving bosom announced a feverish dream, the sleep of one whose heart was far from tranquil. It was at this moment, as Isabella watched the breathings of her hated rival, that she thought of the deed she came to commit. Dressed in the costume of the reckless Calabrian, she was aware that should Donna Maria awake, her shriek, more sudden than the thought, would alarm the crew, and the Duenna would join in the cry of alarm. She turned her eyes opposite to the bed-place of Donna Maria, and ascertained that the Duenna was not there, and that the daughter of Don Emanuel was alone.

Time grew short. The following day, Isabella was to sail, and her rival enjoy, unmolested, the envied society of Konigsmark. Having carefully examined the cabin, and made certain that they were alone, she drew forth the dagger and felt its sharp point ; it wanted but the strength and determination which drove it through the skin of a bull, to rid her at once

of all she feared—and yet now, with the victim in unresisting sleep, she felt as if it were cowardice to strike. Approaching the bed-place, she laid her hand upon Donna Maria's shoulder. She started at the touch. In an instant the hand was over her mouth, whilst Isabella said, "Speak but one word, and this dagger saves the articulation of the second—remain quiet, and you are unhurt!" Releasing her mouth, she looked at her, as the beautiful girl rubbed her eyes, to call back remembrance.

"You are slow to perceive," began Isabella; "in me you might behold the woman you have wronged."

"Woman!" said Donna Maria, somewhat recovering herself.

"Your modesty need not be alarmed," interrupted Isabella, with a sneer, "even if it were Charles John Konigsmark. We have not long to parley. Listen! I have heard all your plans, and I come to balk them! Either consent to follow my directions, or this——" And with the forefinger of the left hand, she pointed

to the length of the dagger. "You have one minute to consider—beyond that, not the smallest moment which makes life."

"I am ready," said the timid girl; "but spare me—oh, spare me! Look not so revengeful; your eyes flash fire, and that horrid dagger is before me!"

"Where is the Duenna?"

"She sailed to-day."

"That was worthy of a Konigsmark! Lie down, and dare to move!" In an instant, Isabella divested herself of the Catalonian dress, and took that of her rival. "Now," she continued, "I will put that weak heart into an unbecoming garb. Quick, and put on that dress!"

"What is your intention?"

"To be revenged, and yet to spare you. I have no time to trifle in questions. Ah! there is the guitar. You may leave that; you will have but little occasion for songs now; and yet, perhaps, between Barcelona and Madrid it might amuse your company."

"On my knees——" said Donna Maria, as she completed her dress.

"Not a moment, for either entreaties or prayers ! Ascend to the deck, without noise. Now, across the plank !"

Donna Maria stopped short, and pointed to the water.

Isabella understood the fear which flitted across the mind of Donna Maria. "Go first," she said, "and fear not ; my revenge shall not be cloaked in treachery. I will forewarn you of your fate.—Go !"

Donna Maria faltered ; but Isabella pointed to the plank, and said, "Go !" And instantly obeying, the trembling girl reached the shore in safety.

"We are more equal here," said Isabella, "although the strength is apparently on your side. A firmer heart beats in this dress now, than formerly ; for oh, I feel how impossible it is for one who truly loves, and is jealous, to shrink from any danger, however appalling. We have some distance to go ; we must quicken our pace. There, wrap that cloak over your shoulders, and give me your arm ; you must be my protector until we are clear of the town. Look there," she continued ; "in that room, where you

see the light, is Konigsmark ; he is even now preparing some treachery for me, and kindness for you, but you will never see him more ; and yet how easily you might bring him to the lattice. Ah ! what noise is this ? Methinks I know the sound of that voice—we will inquire.” Donna Maria shrunk away with fear, but Isabella seized her by the arm, and saying, “ Come, good Señor, I may require your aid,” forced her to advance. In the court-yard were many people, all asserting to an elderly man that no such person was in their hotel—no woman answering the description, either of the young or the old.

“ My father !” said Donna Maria, trembling, and endeavouring to escape.

“ The most fortunate event in your miserable life,” replied Isabella ; “ for I had resolved on a scheme, which would not much have exalted your position in society. Here, Don Emanuel,” she continued—“ here is the bird whose wings would be better clipped. The sooner you take her from Barcelona the better. You see you have little to apprehend, as she has turned a Catalonian, and I a woman.”

Don Emanuel seized his daughter rudely by the arm, and scrutinized her face. He then led her away, without uttering a word; whilst Isabella continued, in a cheerful strain, advising a hasty retreat, and asking the dejected Donna Maria, if one so bravely dressed, did not even say, "Ponga mi a los pies de las Señoritas," or wish all the young women of Barcelona, with whom she was acquainted, that they might live for a thousand years; and as Don Emanuel urged his daughter forward, Isabella said, "That craven heart would never merit a Konigsmark."

CHAPTER XIII.

As Isabella entered her room, Konigsmark turned round, and, mistaking the dress, caught her in his arms, and, tenderly enfolding her, said, "Maria—Maria!" The dimness of the lamp, which hardly gave a flame sufficient to illumine the apartment, prevented the sudden recognition; but, after receiving the warm embrace, Isabella thanked Konigsmark for it, even though it was destined for another. He started back, fixing his eagle eyes upon her, but, with consummate coolness, she disengaged herself from him and retired. In vain he asked how she became possessed of this dress? Not a word did Isabella reply, but, retiring, commended him to his prayers and his bed.

The morning broke cloudy and lowering; there was a brisk gale, the wind was fair, and early was Konigsmark apprized that already the felucca had left the pier, and was in readiness to sail as soon as he should be on board. He whispered some words to the captain, who was an Italian, and his intelligent look answered the question. Isabella's jealous eyes caught the quick glance, but she smiled at her own security. Some rough Italian sailors at once carried the luggage to the vessel; whilst a peculiar nod, seeming to indicate that which belonged to Konigsmark, was not overlooked by Isabella.

But a few minutes elapsed before the luggage was removed, and the travellers about to follow. Winding their way through the dirty streets, they arrived at the pier.

"Your eyes are quick in that direction," began Isabella. "What can there be in that small vessel so much to attract your attention?"

"It is the peculiarity of the rigging."

"She does look particularly neat. Let us go on board. I should like much to see how,

in such small vessels, they contrive to find accommodation for ladies."

"Ladies," replied Konigsmark, as he pettishly turned towards the boat which awaited their arrival, "seldom take passages on board such vessels."

"It must be an uncomfortable residence," replied Isabella, unconcerned, "when houses are near."

Konigsmark made no reply, and they embarked. The wind was fair, and no sooner was Konigsmark on board, than the vessel made sail and shaped her course, the boat which brought them off towed astern, and Konigsmark, to lull all suspicion, went below. Isabella, determined to detain him, quietly cast off the boat; and before the crew, who were busy expanding the sails like two huge wings, were aware of it, she was far astern, and the one man, seeing the felucca continue her course, changed his, and rowed towards the town. Isabella then descended into the cabin, and Konigsmark, availing himself of the opportunity, went instantly on deck.

The boat was gone and far astern; but the vessel, in standing out of the bay, had hugged

the shore, and was now abreast of the bluff headland on which stands the fort of Mount-joye. Without a moment's hesitation, Konigsmark slipped overboard, and swam towards it. On his being missed, the captain felt confident he had acted upon the plan proposed, and, deaf to all the entreaties and assertions of the half-maddened Isabella, continued his course. In vain she declared that she herself had cast the boat adrift; she was now shut in by the headland, and out of sight, and every moment drew the felucca further from the shore. She was baffled by him who had no fixed affection for her, and who now at any risk sought the newer object.

Konigsmark, destined for another death, escaped that of the waves; a strong man, young, vigorous, and a good swimmer, he surmounted all difficulties, and landed in safety. His luggage had not been embarked, but had been conveyed to the vessel in which the lovely Donna Maria was still supposed to be secreted. With all the ardour of expectant youth, he hastened his steps, and, wet and dripping as was his dress, he disregarded all

who noticed him, and stepped across the plank. It is beyond the talent of his biographer to express his surprise. The scanty articles of dress with which she had escaped from Madrid were there untouched; and the bed in which she had been surprised by Isabella bore sufficient signs that it had been tenanted the previous night. Suddenly the thought occurred to him, that, in accordance with the feelings of jealousy so often expressed by Isabella, the object of his new caprice had been murdered, and disposed of in the harbour. But there were no signs of a struggle; neither was there that damning proof of guilt—blood. A thousand conjectures flitted rapidly across his imagination. In vain he questioned the different seamen; not one had seen anybody come on board, nor any one leave the vessel. Equally vain were all inquiries in the town. He could get no information; and for a moment the gay, lively, bold, and desperate Konigsmark gave way to a weakness, more common to women than to men; but he soon surmounted it, and resolved instantly to retrace his steps to the Calle del Sole, in

Madrid. There again his inquiries were vain ; not a soul remained of the family. The flight of the Duenna and Donna Maria (the former believing, in spite of what she had heard, that Isabella was a young man, which induced her to accompany her charge) had been soon discovered, the father had started in search of her, but no tidings had yet been heard of either party.

To hunt the world for his present love would have well suited Konigsmark's ardent disposition and Don Quixote life ; but here was no clue, and Vratz's letter controlled his movements. With the inconstancy which marked his life, he suddenly relinquished all thoughts of again finding Donna Maria, and that evening left Madrid for ever, and determined to return to England. Such was the character of Konigsmark, that he could forget as quickly as he could ardently and suddenly love. We are told that hearts cannot be suddenly torn away, but that it requires time to moulder the affections into forgetfulness ; there are, however, hearts which for days are passionately, fondly enamoured, and

which, with the slightest change of scene, can as suddenly change their affections.

Latterly, Konigsmark had expended much ; and although he frequently recruited his resources from the gaming table, where he was generally fortunate, and these gainings he husbanded with great care, he was now not over-burthened with the world's riches, and his mind began to brood over the chances of the future. His determination was to marry some rich heiress ; and, believing that those seldom fail who vigorously pursue their object, he formed a design, as he journeyed along, of obtaining the widow of Lord Percy. In order the better to work out his plan, he resolved upon a few days' stay at Paris, where he felt confident of being well received by the Ambassador, and of gleaning every information from the Colonel. Without attendants, excepting a miserable little boy, who, mounted on one mule, made that which carried the baggage advance with equal rapidity to Konigsmark's pace, the Swede pursued his route through Spain. It is true, his mind often reverted to Isabella, and her chance of success

in being recognised as the heiress of the Manfredi estates; then he not unfrequently repented of the hasty step he had taken in quitting her; for he felt assured that she loved him with all the desperation of a jealous woman, and that she would gladly lay at his feet the wealth of the world if she possessed it; for, with all the Swede's faults, he had concealed from Isabella the one which was superior to all, and which was the moving-spring of all his actions—money: He was now too far advanced in another pursuit to turn towards Naples. With a heart which sometimes rebuked him for the manner in which he had left her, and with a conscience which seldom annoyed him by any painful reminiscences, he passed through all the dangers of his long journey, and arrived safely at Paris; congratulating himself upon having so far blinded Vratz, that his faithful and devoted servant never harboured a thought against the man who had thus adroitly robbed him of his heart's best object, and who had thus basely left her to fight her own way, under every possible disadvantage, to regain a father.

No sooner in Paris, than Konigsmark called at the Embassy, and was received most cordially by Colonel Brett. The Swede appeared particularly welcome ; and, after inquiries after his health, the extent of his perils, and his thousand escapes by flood and field, the loquacious secretary, knowing exactly the pulse of the ambassador, mentioned the death of Lord Percy, and the numerous suitors anxious to secure the hand of the virgin widow and richest heiress in England.

“ It was but a marriage in name,” continued Brett ; “ she was confined in the nursery, and watched over by the old lady ; Lord Ogle died in November, one year after the ceremony which made her a bride, but never a wife.”

“ And now,” interrupted Konigsmark, “ of course, she has many admirers, and many suitors ?”

“ Lord Essex, who is, by marriage, the uncle to the young widow, seems anxious to forward the suit of the Earl of Kingston or the Lord Cranburn ; but there are as many intrigues to dispose of her as to settle the affairs of a con-

quered kingdom. The field is open to all ; and, methinks, one so fair of form and fame as yourself—one who boasts a European reputation, might carry off this prize : for you are like the knight who is already booted and spurred for the contest. You are known to all the parties—sure of assistance from the Duchess of Northumberland and the ambassador—a favourite—acknowledged by the bride, and with such fame as women always cherish—a love of adventure—success with their sex—and indomitable courage.”

“ I will be frank with you,” said the Swede. “ I left Madrid, hearing of Lord Ogle’s death, and with the view of offering myself, should it be possible.”

“ In love, as in war, all is possible ; and in both there is oftentimes diplomacy. A match of this kind is like the negotiation of a commercial treaty—one party gives so much to insure a profit in another manner.” Brett stopped, and looked steadily at Konigsmark.

“ Even so,” replied the Swede. “ It is but fair ; if one party helps another to a benefit, that party should not lose by the transaction.”

" I see the Count's character for *clairvoyance* has not been underrated," said Brett.

" Nor am I the man to swerve from my word."

" Of that there can be little doubt ; a promise made by Count Konigsmark might be considered as sure as the light of heaven, when the sun appears above the horizon. I think, with this understanding, it might be accomplished."

" But what would Montague say of this ?"

" He will never know one word of the affair ; nor must you mention, by any word, hint, or expression, that I am willing to assist you in this business. The Countess of Northumberland would be dreadfully shocked, and the ambassador compromised, by the slightest suspicion. It can be managed between ourselves, and, perhaps, you would not object to devote an hour's conversation to this object, at your earliest convenience."

" My earliest convenience is the present moment ; delays are always dangerous, and time, which continues its steady, undeviating course, might again throw an enterprising lover in the

way, to wrest this rich prize from my wavering grasp. To the point, Colonel—I understand it thus : that for a certain sum, in the event of my marriage, I am to have your powerful aid, which, of course, I understand also is to include that of the Countess of Northumberland and Mr. Montague ; and, mayhap, a word from the Duchess of Cleveland might influence the King in my behalf ; for I have already received such marks of the royal favour, that I am in hopes his Majesty might not be averse to the alliance.”

“ Such is about the pith ; but there are other indispensable arrangements. It is a business of much delicacy, in which you are to understand, that, whatever agreement takes place, it is between us two ; you know of no third party. It will, of course, be my object to insure your success ; as without that, I cannot profit by the arrangement. Now, as to the sum : the fortune is immense, the reversions excessive. She is the richest heiress of our rich country ; and to dispose of her hand and her wealth to a foreigner will not be accomplished without much trouble.”

“ And perhaps, as in the case of Lord Ogle, the settlements will be so stringent as to keep the hands of the husband from dabbling in the pockets of the wife, in which case, my dear Colonel, any large sum would be difficult to pay; and I might, from necessity, be obliged to forfeit my word; for before I could pay, I must have the power so to do.”

“ True, Count, true; but out of the large income, yearly instalments could be paid, until the whole sum would be liquidated; ten or twelve thousand pounds would scarcely be missed.”

“ Twelve thousand pounds sterling!” said Konigsmark, with surprise, “ not missed from any fortune! why, it would buy a kingdom!”

“ It seems,” replied Brett, calmly, “ to be too great, to buy ten or twenty times its worth. I heard his Excellency’s bell!” said the Colonel. “ I must crave your pardon for leaving you at this interesting moment; but it is a summons I dare not disobey.”

Konigsmark never heard the bell, neither did any bell ring; but Brett, with his cautious

prudence, having given a hint of the sum required, left his guest at liberty to accept or to make a proposition more in accordance with his own views, as to the value of the purchase.

“ He is a beggarly Swede !” said Montague to Brett ; “ but he is a good card to play off against Thynne : the fellow has made a name ; the King admires him much—and women are more apt to listen to the impassioned words of one known to be successful than to the most modest merit. Girls are captivated by appearances ; and the babbling tongue, which circulates deeds of valour and determination in a stranger, renders his approach easier, in proportion to the warmth of the eulogy. Our better game is Thynne ; he will not pay as much, but he is surer in his payments. However, Brett, continue to manage the Swede ; keep him with us, and mayhap, when the Countess of Macclesfield’s intrigue with Lord Rivers becomes known, and we can contrive to let the unsuspecting Earl know of that circumstance, a separation will take place, and you, my worthy Brett, may marry the divorced Countess. She will be rich, and worthy of

your aim ; and her having been divorced will render the marriage convenient to her and profitable to you. In this world, we must look to the actual requisite to all comfort and all luxury—money. The world will babble ; but a fig for the world—turn it, Brett, to advantage, as I intend to do, and have done.”

CHAPTER XIV.

IN the summer of 1681, the widowed Lady Percy became Lady Elizabeth Thynne ; in that year the bride was fifteen years of age. She was immediately separated from her husband by his own consent, in order that she might spend a year on the continent. She went to Holland.

Well had Brett and Montague managed the affair. Konigsmark, suspecting himself to have been duped, retired to Sweden.

"I dined," says Evelyn, "on the 15th of October, 1681, with the Earl of Essex, who after dinner, in his study, where we were alone, related to me how much he had been scandalized and injured in the report of his being

privy to the marriage of his lady's niece, the rich young widow of the late Lord Ogle, sole daughter of the Earl of Northumberland ; showing me a letter from Mr. Thynne, excusing himself for not communicating his marriage to his lordship. He acquainted me also with the whole story of that unfortunate lady's being betrayed by her grandmother, the Countess of Northumberland, Montague, and Brett, for money ; and that though, upon the importunity of the Duke of Monmouth, he had delivered to the grandmother a particular of the jointure which Mr. Thynne pretended he would settle on the lady, yet he totally discouraged the proceedings."

Thomas Thynne, Esq., of Longleat, in Wiltshire, was the son of Sir Thomas Thynne, of Richmond, in the county of Surrey, Knight, and the inheritor of the extensive estates of his uncle, Sir James Thynne, who had died without issue in 1670. The Thynnes were of an old and most respectable family, and he moved in the highest circles : he had been intimate with the Duke of York, afterwards James II., but quarrelling with him, he attached himself to

the opposition, and was greeted as a friend by the Duke of Monmouth. Thynne was commonly known as Tom of ten thousand, in those days a very large fortune ; and he figures as one of the celebrated personages in Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*.

Konigsmark, although unsuccessful in his love,—for the offer of his hand had been rejected, not by the lady Elizabeth, who looked upon him favourably, but through the intrigues of others,—began now to doubt the witch's prophecy ; the star of his destiny had shone for another, and still, although twice married, as pure as untouched snow.

The reception he had experienced from the childish wife had inflamed his desire, and during his brief stay in Sweden, a thousand thoughts suggested themselves, and a thousand plans were imagined, by which he might still accomplish his object. It was now that the idea crossed him, that if again the lady became a widow, he might certainly obtain her for his wife ; that she had been disposed of against her consent, and with her young heart fluttering for him, he was well aware : being a man fond

of overcoming difficulties, warm and ardent in pursuit of any cherished object, firm and resolved in all undertakings, he resolved, the moment he had arranged his affairs, to return to England, and there accomplish his wishes.

Konigsmark narrowly escaped shipwreck : he left Gottenburg, was overtaken by a fierce gale of wind, and, after many changes and chances, landed at Hull, and immediately repaired to Windsor, being entrusted with letters from the king of Sweden to the king of England. His reception at Court was flattering, and for some time he revelled in the luxury which the licentious Charles II. enjoyed. His foreign biographers assert, that about this time he expressed a wish to join a fleet which was about to sail for the defence of Tangiers ; contrary winds preventing the expedition from setting forth, the impatient Konigsmark left England, passed over to France, and hurrying through Spain, (not even visiting the Calle del Sole,) he arrived at Tangiers, just as the garrison had made a sally. At once joining their ranks, and urging them on by his brave and resolute conduct, he drove the

Moors into the sea ; the flush of victory exciting him again and again to expose his person in similar attacks.

The subjects of the Emperor of Morocco having sued for peace, Konigsmark, still panting for all the excitement of war, changed the scene, embarked on board an English ship, and cruised against the Algerines. At last, wearied with this, and still anxious to secure the young bride, the only one of her sex who ever had eluded his grasp, he finally returned to England in the beginning of the year 1682, and immediately repaired to the Amsterdam Arms, where he found his faithful servant and friend, Vratz.

The vessel which conveyed Isabella from Barcelona to Naples made good her course. A prey to grief, and scarcely crediting the amount of her misfortune in the loss of Konigsmark, four days and nights passed away in sleepless excitement ; the fifth morning, as the day broke, Vesuvius became visible, and the splendid bay of Naples spread out its rich scenery to the mariner.

From her youth upwards, Isabella had been

the child of misfortune ; nurtured in the lap of unkindness, the only dawn of tranquillity had been with Konigsmark, whom she loved with a passion blinding her to his faults, and prompting her to pray for his welfare and happiness. She found a thousand excuses for his late behaviour ; she accused herself of petulance, of wilfully thwarting his wishes, and a smile lit up her beautiful countenance when she could convince herself that she alone was to blame ; that she had brought the calamity upon herself ; and, even in her tears for his loss, she justified his behaviour. The calm of that delightful sea failed to sooth her mind, the magnificent scenery, which enchanted even the rough sailor, failed to enchant her ; the weight was too heavy on her heart, the oppression of spirits bowed her to the earth ; those beautiful black eyes no longer sparkled with animation, but a dreary wretchedness and loneliness marked her features and her manners.

The captain of the vessel had gleaned somewhat of her situation from Konigsmark, and had also received strict injunctions as to his behaviour towards her ; as far as his miserable

vessel could contribute to her comfort, the captain had made her subservient to that end ; but he never had exchanged a word with her, being one of those men who think that grief drowns itself in tears, and hope springs the clearer in proportion to the flood. They now neared the anchorage, and the blunt sailor thus accosted her :—

“ It will not be well for you to land, Madama, until I have made some inquiries of those who may be useful to you.”

“ Then I apprehend that I shall be obliged to remain on board of your vessel for many a weary night.”

“ Not so, Madama. I know exactly the house and the person to whom you are consigned—a good woman enough ; warm as a friend, a devil as an enemy. Her father was a brigand, and her son a smuggler ; her husband is a kind of receiver and arranger of schemes which seldom fail. If I might advise thee, Madama——”

“ Ah, that some one in whom I could trust would but counsel the most forlorn and wretched of women !”

“ You will never want a friend whilst Felipe Benvenuto lives.”

“ Is that the name of him to whom I am to apply ?”

“ That depends upon yourself. I am that man, and I never saw a woman in grief that I did not befriend her. May I tell Madama my thoughts ?”

“ Speak, Felipe Benvenuto ; my ears are open to your advice.”

“ José Vergani, the husband of the woman to whom you are to go, has more wit and talent than all the lazzaroni of Naples put together, and that is not saying much for him after all. He weighs human creatures in the scales of avarice, and he buys and sells them as his wife does macaroni. If you suit his purpose, he will buy you ; if you don't, he will sell you. The Count told me of your early life. Now mark the words of Felipe Benvenuto : if there has been a nobleman for the last twenty-five years who has lost a child, and will pay for its recovery, you are as sure of a father as if you had never left one, and a good handful of piastres he'll take care to pocket by the

sale ; so that, while you remain young and handsome, you will be a valuable acquisition to Vergani ; but if you were old and ugly, he would civilly decline the honour of your company, unless you had money, and that would never be long safe in your pocket."

"It appears that I am consigned, as you call it, to a curious merchant," said Isabella, affecting a smile.

"The very best for your purpose in all Naples," replied Benvenuto. "I tell you, you are as sure of a father and a mother and a fine property as if you had them all ; but Vergani will mortgage them for you. As long as you live, he will be a pensioner on your property. Shoot her round the Mole-head carefully, Thomaso—so, steady, my boy—get the hawser ready forward, and haul the boat up—so you had better remain on board until I have seen José ; and before the sun sets to-night you will be in a handsome chamber. Don't talk of your money or your jewels ; and, although your eyes are bright, Vergani's sly look will—Shove off in the boat and make the end fast to that post,—Hard aport, Tho-

maso ! and don't spoil the figure-head of this zebec, and I'll say a mass to-night for our safe arrival. Step below, Madama, these fellows have sharp looks, and there is no occasion to bring flies to the honey ; as soon as I have done my own business, I'll look after yours."

Thus did Felipe Benvenuto give his advice and his orders at the same moment ; and little heeded he if the former was followed, as long as the latter were not disobeyed. He was one of those careless, cheerful mariners, who sing in a thunder-storm, and who talk of love and adventures in a hurricane : he had escaped a thousand perils from pirates and white squalls ; he had smoked his cigar during an execution with as much indifference as if he were seated on the taffrail of his own vessel, in the calm moonlight of an Italian sky ; yet was he a very true friend, and, having taken some interest in Isabella's forlorn situation, and much admiring her beauty, he resolved to protect her, even from the more subtle and determined Vergani.

The vessel made fast to the pier, the sails furled, the custom-house officer on board, and all the prolixity of forms over, Benvenuto

shaped his course to the house of Vergani, and, without much ceremony, as it was the usual resort of all mariners, he entered.

"What ! returned again safe !" said a short man, whose low, cunning look, sharp eyes, and badly-formed head, announced him as Vergani. "Will the saints always prosper sinners, and are the pirates never alert ?"

"It is evident, my worthy José, that the saints do occasionally prosper sinners, or you, my host, would long since have fallen into cruel hands. A flask of wine, José—I have somewhat to say to you, and the more private the better."

"Is it this ?" said José, taking a pinch of snuff. "What's the name of the custom-house officer on board ? We are all friends here."

"I dare say," replied Benvenuto, "they are all your friends, and I like to be my own ; so closed doors and thick walls suit my views better than public rooms and unknown ears."

"If I attended to all my customers as I do to you, Felipe, I should have to build a secret chamber, and lose half my life in private conferences. But, come along ; we must humour

one another at times. There, now are you satisfied? I believe we might fight fifty duels with pistols here, and no one interrupt us. Here's your wine and your glass, and now proceed your own way—asking questions only loses time."

"Supposing I put a prize in your hand worth twenty thousand dollars, how much would you give me for my share?" began Benvenuto; "but before we go any farther—this"—and both made the sign of the cross.

"And now that," said Vergani, pointing to the flask, "that unseals the lips which our sign is ever to fasten again. Your health, Felipe. Why, you see, much depends upon the nature of the prize; if it comes to hand without any danger, and can be disposed of without much risk, then I think you should have one-half; but if there is to be fighting first, and hanging afterwards, or such amusement as being chained to the oar for life, then the matter is different; for the men I might lose in grasping this prize I should have to replace; and if it came to a trial, in order to keep the others of the gang true to me, I must pay much for the defence.

Things in my general merchant business are not done for nothing, and before the money is shared, a great deal must be risked."

"All true, Vergani—all true; every man for himself, and God for us all. The French have another version of this saying, more in accordance with their deserts. Then, supposing this last case—that there should be some hanging afterwards?"

"Then, I should think two-eighths for the pilot-fish which leads the shark to the bait—"

"Ay," interrupted the Captain, "and, like the pilot-fish, security and protection from all attacks."

"Agreed, Benvenuto—agreed."

"Take some more wine, Vergani; now we understand the harbour, we need not fear the shoals. We have done a little business together before now."

"By the mass!—yes. It is now twenty-two years since I left off the more hazardous trade of being a bandit myself; now I work with other arms, and other bodies—I only use the head. Where is this prize?"

"Safe and sound, and likely to remain so,

for some time, at least, until we are perfectly agreed. In the first place, this is an affair in which none of your crew need be engaged—we can do it ourselves ; and although I could manage it all myself, and keep all the reward, yet I think you would be of quicker dispatch.”

“ To the point—to the point, good Benvenuto. Here is my dagger ; on its cross I swear to be true and just in all my dealings.”

“ Swear again, Vergani ; and add, that no claim for recapture, on your part, is to be allowed.”

“ I swear.”

“ You shall hear of the business to-night.—Ah, I had nearly forgotten—do you know one Vratz, a Swede ?”

“ Yes. One of that name came to me upon the subject of a lost girl ; it was six months since, and from that time I have never heard of him, or the girl. I believe I could serve her and myself also, if I could but find her.”

“ And what do you propose to do with her, should she arrive ?”

“ It depends much upon her beauty. If very

fair, I should shelter her in Calabria, until I could dispose of her to the highest bidder. There is a Swedish Count concerned in this transaction, who stole the girl from Malta, and left her at Messina. Mayhap she has found a market for her own charms, and I shall never hear more of her; but I have the means of turning her yet to some account, as I am to be paid for my trouble, and I can charge this conversation under the head of inquiries—but to your business, Benvenuto.”

“I bargain for no cruelty, and a restitution of the property, should I deem it requisite.”

“Am I a Jew, to be so suspected, or has José Vergani so bad a reputation amongst gentlemen, as to retain property from another against his will?”

“Such things have occurred, Vergani.”

“But not with friends, good Benvenuto—to the point.”

“This evening, at nine, expect me.”

CHAPTER XV.

IN the beginning of the year 1682, Konigsmark returned to England. It was in the month of February that the Count arrived at the Amsterdam Arms, and inquired for Vratz. The latter soon appeared, and bowed lowly before his former master.

“Not so—not so, Vratz ; you are a captain in a French regiment, and now independent. This place is too public for our conversation.”

“I have a small apartment in Nicholas Lane, my Lord.”

“By your leave, Vratz, we will have no nobility amongst us, to excite suspicion ; neither would I be seen much with you ; but this night, at nine o'clock, I will be with you at

your lodgings. Have wherewithal to allay thirst, and mind that no servant is in the way. I shall dine here to-day; but sit you at a distance from me, and take no heed of my words, nor enter into any conversation with me. Appear to all a stranger until two o'clock. Adieu."

At two o'clock, Konigsmark, in a different dress, and such as indicated a man of mercantile habits, arrived, and took his place at the ordinary. It was a strange mixture of men and manners. Here all nations resorted, and the various languages of the continent were as common as the English tongue in that house. It was a time of political excitement: the Duke of Monmouth was the idol of the populace; and the Popish plot, and the murder of Sir Edmondbury Godfrey, were the topics of general conversation—more especially as the ministry was tottering, and the Duke of Monmouth the hope of the country.

At this table the quick eye of Konigsmark discovered Borasky, and with him Stern: not far from them, and apparently keeping them in close conversation, was Vratz.

It was a vile, dull, drizzly day, and the straggling daylight scarce surmounted the difficulty of penetrating the fog. Konigsmark, whose dress had been altered for one more commonly seen at the Amsterdam Arms, and who had disguised his features under the shade of a deep dark periwig, was unnoticed by Borasky, who, from the lapse of time since they met, and the change occasioned by the disguise, would certainly not have known him had he been nearer ; neither would any of those with whom the Count was familiar have known the Swede. His object now was secrecy, and his disguise was effectual.

Various were the remarks as to the state of the times, and occasionally the argument became heated ; but, with a cautious prudence, Konigsmark avoided entering upon any subject, and once, when referred to, evaded the question, by urging how poorly he was informed upon the point, and how ignorant he was of the language. Once only he caught the name of Thynne, and this was in conjunction with that of Monmouth. He listened attentively, and heard how much in favour his

rival was with the Duke, and how often they rode together in the carriage of the former. Monmouth was not unknown to Konigsmark; the latter had formed a high chivalrous opinion of him, and was a warm and fervent admirer of his character. It was with difficulty Konigsmark restrained his curiosity; but he had a deep game to play, and it could best be managed in secrecy.

“And to me,” said a fat merchant, “it is marvellous how the Duke can ally himself with one whose only recommendation is his money.”

“And truly,” replied another, “no bad recommendation either: his father has little enough to give him, and is himself a pensioner of the great French king. ’Tis a strange state of affairs;—French women and French money seem sadly to embarrass our royalty.”

“Monmouth,” replied the first, “does well to bleed this upstart Thynne, who married the greatest heiress of our times, and who might better have become a duchess.”

“It is but a marriage in name,” continued the other. “His wife is abroad, and has been from the day of the marriage, poor child! She

was sold in her first and her second alliance, and would be again, should any chance deliver her from Thynne. It is said she preferred a foreigner, whom she knew before her marriage with Lord Ogle; but that the grandmother, and that madman Montague, arranged the business between them, using the stranger as a cat's-paw. If I had been he I would have won her somehow, or given myself a chance by leaving her a widow."

At this moment Konigsmark, who had attentively listened to these remarks, rose and left the table. Vratz never recognised him; and, after paying for his dinner, the Swede, carefully muffled in his coat, and covering his face lest the cold wind should find access to it, walked quickly to King Street, Westminster.

It was about four in the afternoon, and already had London become as dark as at midnight in summer. The Count took from his writing-desk a sheet of paper, and commenced with much eagerness writing different notes; after having made remarks which were destined for Vratz's consideration, he turned over in his mind the possibility of an in-

terview with Thynne's wife. She, however, he had learnt, was in Holland; and the conversation he had listened to at the Amsterdam ordinary convinced him that the stranger alluded to was himself; for he remembered well the childish eagerness with which the Lady Elizabeth had first met him, and those little marks of affection which cannot be concealed in the young and the innocent. Suddenly a thought struck him, and, laying aside his disguise, he walked out to the house of the Swedish Resident, with whom he was well acquainted. He had yet four or five hours before he was to meet Vratz in Nicholas Lane,—the proper residence of Vratz was in King Street, Westminster,—but as he had been apprized partially of his master's intentions, and had been warned that on the Count's arrival they were never to be seen together if possible, to carry out this plan of secrecy the room in Nicholas Lane had been hired, and the rooms in King Street made over to Konigsmark.

The Resident was astonished at the sudden arrival of Konigsmark, whom he understood to have taken service under Louis Quatorze, and

whose rapid movement in the affair of Tangiers had excited the wonder of that sluggish age. The reception was cordial, and the Count pressed to remain to dinner.

"I have dined," replied the Count.

"He is no genuine Swede who cannot dine twice," replied the Resident. "I will take no excuse, upon this reasoning—that I am low of spirits, and the exploits of one so renowned as Konigsmark must cheer an hour for an old friend. Excuse the egotism of the invitation, and grant my request. A man who dines at two, and a Swede, can surely be enabled at five to go through the formality, if his appetite denies him excess. In a quarter of an hour it will be served ; and, meanwhile, I commend you to this good fireside, for the weather is sadly raw and cold, whilst I arrange one small packet of some consequence for our king."

Although Konigsmark had resisted the invitation, it was the very thing he had expected, and coveted. The Resident was a bon-vivant, who expatiated largely on the comforts of affluence, and who denied himself few luxuries, either for the love of heaven or the advice of

the doctor. In about twenty minutes the dinner was announced, and the Resident, saying—"Let me be your Lordship's guide to my own table"—led the way.

Konigsmark, although of careful and abstemious habits, could, without fear of intoxication, indulge somewhat with impunity in the debauchery of the table—a custom highly prevalent in that loose, immoral age. His friend delighted in such excesses. The warm comfortable room excited them to hilarity; and tales of bull-fights, Spanish intrigues, and Egyptian wonders, soon passed away an hour.

"And after all these adventures, Count, you have escaped marriage?" said the Resident.

"Without much money," said the Count, "it would be foolish to rush into matrimony; whilst I am young, I can always contrive with my sword to carve out a name upon every capital, and find relief from idleness in adventure."

"Ay, you should have married Lady Ogle."

"How so?" said Konigsmark, taken by surprise, and finding the conversation turning upon the very point he had intended.

"There," continued the Resident, "was everything necessary for man—a young girl married but unwedded—with a ceremony performed, not consummated—a wife in name and a virgin in fact. Such a prize was combated for by many, and as many intrigues were on foot as would have compromised the peace of Europe; after dozens of high names and lofty lineages had been proposed, she married one Thynne, the present friend of Monmouth. The latter allows him certain honours of friendship in return for the enormous sums he borrows and spends—thus making condescension ample reward and repayment."

"Thynne!" said Konigsmark, with assumed astonishment. "There is a man of that name much my debtor; and I would I could find means, suddenly, to take that satisfaction of him, which it is my intention to demand."

"How could this Thynne have offended you?"

"You have heard how, some years ago, I was set upon during my voyage from Paris to England, when I was accompanied by one of my retainers, and how, by desperate resolution, we freed ourselves of their attack."

"I have—and marvelled what good genius

could have saved your lives. But what of this?"

"I have discovered that these men were hired by command of this Thynne, who, previously to the marriage of Lord Ogle, had foolishly imagined that I, on account of my intimacy with Montague, was the destined lord of this heiress, and he wished to dispose of me in order to advance his own suit. Now, it shall go hard with him, if by accident we should meet, either at court or in the malls."

"I see," said the Resident. "Then, after Ogle's death, and when you were abroad, he succeeded in making the heiress his bride?"

"Just so; and now, tell me, how stands the English law? Supposing that, in revenge for such scurvy cowardice of hiring cut-throats to murder me, I, in a fair and upright fight, as becomes gentlemen of our grade, were to kill him, would that bar my marriage with his wife?"

"Most certainly not," replied the Resident; "although it is not very common for those who kill the husband to gain the hand of the widow. It is said Richard did so, but my me-

mory cannot charge itself with another instance."

"Then no difficulty would be occasioned by the law? Are you well versed in it—so well, indeed, as to answer positively?"

"By my faith, you speak so resolutely and seriously, that one would imagine you already had determined upon such a trial."

"It is my manner," said Konigsmark. "Whenever I strive to gain information, I listen attentively and speak earnestly. Then such is the law?"

"There is no law to hinder such a marriage," said the Resident.

"Then I marvel much such experiments are not more frequently tried—in my case, I could have no ulterior intentions of such moment. I might, by nature of the insult put upon me, seek a duello with this Thynne, if I can, with more certainty, trace him as the origin of that attack; for I have proof that, at the last gasp, when I held a dying ruffian by the throat, he begged me to loose my grasp, and told me he was pushed to this desperate deed by one

Thynne, and that it was against the Count Konigsmark that he acted."

"It is strange that when last in England you did not pursue him."

"Then I was too much engaged; and it is only now that I trace the reason why he sought my life, in order to secure one he believed attached to me; and how do we know but that he dispatched Lord Ogle to cover his designs?"

"Of that he could never be suspected. The Lord Ogle died a natural death, and no violence was ever suspected."

"Still," continued Konigsmark, after a pause, "you are certain the law could not prevent a marriage?"

"Of that rest satisfied. Tell me, do you know the lady well?"

"I have dandled her on my knee as an infant, when that old fool, Lady Algernon, bedizened the child in silks and satins, and made her the figure of court women. Nay, more, I somewhere heard that at this last marriage the Lady Ogle greatly resisted all overtures from Thynne, saying, that she liked more a foreigner

she had seen as a child, and that she had conceived such a fondness for him as springs from the affection of a warm-hearted girl, who remembers kind words and kinder actions, when all around her are cold, formal, and distant."

"I would recommend you much, Count, to forego any intention of revenge upon Thynne. In the heat of the affray you might have misunderstood the dying man, for then Lord Ogle was alive; and why should Thynne seek to murder you, when you in no way stood in his path? Had the lady been unmarried, then, indeed, your suspicions might have been well-formed; but such base acts are rare in this country, and hired ruffians, poisoners, and murderers are generally found in Italy."

"I tell you these were French and Italians that did assault us. Neither could I be mistaken in the name; and as my life was nearly in his hands, so will I hold his in mine, if I can betray him into a quarrel, and meet him in a fair and honourable duel. I would not imitate his cowardice in seeking others to do a deed which is beneath the fair fame of one who as yet has done nothing to sully his reputation."

"That is spoken like the Konigsmark. But still, as Thynne is powerful from his money, and you, Count, are well known to the king and the highest nobility of the court, the affair would occupy more than common notice, and might lead to more serious results."

"Leave that to my mind. I will not act hastily or unadvisedly; but again I ask if you are certain as to the law?"

"Assuredly, Count."

"And you can recommend me to one cunning in the law, should I require his assistance?"

"No doubt."

"Then I shall now wish you good night; although it is yet early, I wish to make some preparations for a journey to Windsor."

"Your stay in England, Count, will it be long?"

"It depends much on circumstances; and more especially if his majesty desires my stay, until he may have some communication to make to our sovereign."

"He will have more to make to his minister in France. There are odd tales of the gossiping nobility, concerning Montague's late in-

trigues with the Duchess, which have come to Charles' ear from her own pen. We fancy his majesty feels rather sorely upon the point, although he will plead this as an excuse for a wider separation."

"I believe," said the Count, "that the story is a fabrication, to hide another intrigue with which the King would be less satisfied."

"It cannot be with that child, the Countess of Sussex?"

"It can be with child, girl, woman, mother, or widow, if Montague is concerned. Good night! I will see you again shortly."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE night was dark and misty ; the scanty lights scarcely served to warn the passenger of the street, and the slippery pavement afforded but a perilous footstep. Konigsmark hastened to Nicholas Lane ; the shops were still open, and here and there some drunken workmen, released from thought and from worldly care, had tumbled into the kennel and slept, although the very elements opposed such relaxation. Pushing his way, without heeding impediments, Konigsmark arrived at Temple Bar. He had yet twenty minutes before the hour fixed for the conversation with Vratz. As he passed the archway, he heard two men in deep

conversation, and speaking Swedish. The first word which awakened his attention, was the name of his former retainer ; he turned away his head, and, wrapping himself carefully in his cloak, so as to hide his features, looked into a shop, keeping his ears open to catch every sound.

“ We are to be there, then, at twelve to night ? ”

“ That is the hour fixed ; and we must be punctual, for we are now the Count’s servants, and expected to do his bidding. He is a brave and generous master, but rigid and strict. If our Captain has been insulted, it is our duty to fight for him, and I’ll do it.”

“ So will I,” replied the other, “ if it becomes necessary ; but it is an odd story.”

“ Ay ; we have little to do with the reason. Nations go to war, and immense masses become instantaneous cutthroats and plunderers, under the denomination of heroes and conquerors, and they never inquire the reason why this sudden change is worked upon them : so with us ; enough that we are told *he* is the foe, the declared enemy of our captain, and

that the captain demands his life ; it is our business to take it."

" And to be hung for it afterwards ?"

" We are not to look at the consequences, we are only to obey. Come, it is cold here, and we have yet time to taste some good old October. By my faith, Borasky, these fellows understand the art of brewing."

" I wish I could understand why at this moment those Lapland witches seem to push me on to do your bidding."

" Oh, Lapland devils !—the only witches I fear, in these dark nights, are the beautiful witches of this country ; and I feel that moral men, like myself, should never trust themselves within the power of their incantations. Come, come ! to-morrow we may have other work to do, and less time to do it in."

Konigsmark started when he heard the name of Borasky ; and the very reference to the Lapland witches drew his own mind to the star of his destiny ; his buoyant imagination at once gave way to a thousand speculations. He felt somewhat assured that she still was to be his, and whatever sacrifice was to be made

he was ready to make it. In this state of mind, he arrived at Vratz's house. He had walked fast—as people in love, or anxious for money, ever walk ; unheeding all that passed, and only busy with their own minds, and their own intentions.

Konigsmark, lifting his cane, tapped twice at a window to the left of the door, and shortly afterwards Vratz appeared with a light ; he opened the door with great care, and placing his finger on his lips, so as to indicate the necessity of silence, admitted the Count. A double door led them into a small parlour ; a cheerful fire warmed the miserable apartment, and on a round deal table stood a bottle of white wine, some biscuits, and some walnuts.

Konigsmark smiled at the preparations ; and, releasing himself from the heavy and half-saturated folds of his cloak, hung it over a chair, and, drawing another, sat down at a comfortable distance from the fire.

In the mean time, Vratz had carefully surveyed a small bed-room which opened into their parlour, and, cautiously fastening an outer door, left the other communication open, after

inspecting every closet, the bed, the floor, and behind the curtains of the further window.

“I have done this twice already,” he began, in a low voice, “and yet every now and then I fancy I hear voices. I am glad you are come, for the moan of the wind made me uncomfortable, and the heavy splash of the rain startled me. New furniture creaks, and sometimes imitates the tread of a man; but this is old enough to have left off such useless noises.”

“Excepting,” said Konigsmark, “when a heavy man ventures to use it. What ails thee, man?—are you afraid that spirits come through keyholes, and embody themselves in wholesome flesh when they have gained admittance?”

“I could face a devil by daylight; but I would not, if I could prevent it, allow the breeze to hear our words, it might carry them where we should not much like to have them repeated, and the moments lost in assuring our safety can well be spared. We have until one quarter of midnight, but it might be fatal if you were seen here. Where is that admirable disguise?”



"I keep it until after the deed is done, and regret I wore it to-day."

"I understand. But you were unnoticed; nor could the sharpest jailer have penetrated that covering. No one knows of your arrival in England?"

"Excepting our Resident," replied Konigsmark, with indifference.

Vratz turned up his eyes, and said, "I should as soon have mentioned my arrival to the Chief-Justice."

"And why not?"

"If the deed were done, as I intend it to be, your arriving afterwards from the Continent would have shut the eyes of the most vigilant suspicion."

"And what suspicion could exist?"

"In these affairs, there are always some loopholes by which vigilance traces the principals."

"I fear no trace, as I fear no danger to our work. As I came along, I heard Borasky, our old Lapland friend, talking with a Swede: the Polander has improved in our language; he

mentioned you, and spoke of me. Is he the tool with which we are to work?"

"The same. I wrote to him at Hamburg, saying you desired some retainers to enter into the service of the French King, and that believing him to be a man of vast courage, I invited him to come forthwith."

"And the other?"

"Is one Lieutenant Stern, a good-natured man enough—and the one I intend to be hanged for us, should it be requisite. It is my intention to make Stern work upon Borasky to do it; and that you, never appearing at all in the affair, may at a convenient season disavow every act of your retainers, and allow them to swing for the amusement of the public—whilst the star of your destiny shines for you. You mentioned something about a commission for me in the army of the Grand Monarque?"

"It is here."

"That is a safe retreat for me. I have not had time to inform you, that not long ago I led the forlorn hope at Mons,* when but

* See English Causes Célèbres.

two besides myself escaped. For this service the Prince of Orange made me a lieutenant of his guards; and the King of Sweden has given me a troop of horse."

"By our Lady, Vratz, you have thriven well; you only want a commission in the English navy, and then you will always be at war with some nation or other."

"It is right, Count, you should understand at once how the matter stands. Both Stern and Borasky believe themselves hired to be your followers; and your fame was quite sufficient inducement. You are now believed to be in Paris. I have informed these fellows that Thynne has insulted me, and I have called upon them to aid me in his chastisement. Thynne is much attached to the Monmouth party, and aids the Duke with money—so that, should he be disposed of, the Count will have one powerful enemy the less, and justice may go to sleep without much fear of being jogged by a royal arm. I propose to act to-morrow."

"The plot is well laid, but it seems like cowardice in me to keep aloof."

"Pooh, pooh, Count! what are such fellows

made for, but to serve their betters ; the public perhaps would like to see a Count hung—that would be a novelty ; but they will be gratified with a brace of foreigners, who, I hope, should it come to this, will not disgrace their country, but walk like gentlemen by blood to their execution ; they shall not want for a priest to absolve them,—although they are both Protestants, I believe.”

“There is no woman in the case, I hope, Vratz ?”

“I would as soon trust Satan. A woman is only on her guard in giving an answer ; and to entrust one with a secret is as fatal to discovery, as is song-singing to a party sent to surprise an enemy. Stern talks of his morals, and that is suspicious ; but, as for Borasky, he would frighten the most desperate woman in Christendom.”

“I like not this, Vratz. I never was the man yet to shrink from an enterprise, or to put forward any poor fellow to be butchered, whilst I was to reap the benefit ; let me tell Borasky myself, I can manage to bind him to secrecy ?”

“ Let me go and buy the rope for your execution, Count.”

“ I have a mind to go forth to-morrow, and accidentally to run against this Thynne, then, drawing my rapier, instantly challenge him to a fight.”

“ And what then ?” said Vratz, very coldly.

“ Then ! why marry his widow.”

“ Indeed ! and do you know so very little of an English woman, as to believe she would wed the murderer of her former husband ? The plan is absurd, good Count ; no one will accuse you of cowardice,—and what is the use of a man being somebody in life, if he is to be hung for his own deeds ? If ever I live to have followers of my own, I shall feel very safe until I am taken off in the natural way.”

“ Well, at any rate, give Borasky a sword from me.”

“ Ay, that I will, and a musquetoen, and a pair of pistols, and one neat little one to keep in his pocket,—so that if he feels inclined he may shoot himself, and stop the babble of his tongue.”

“ You speak coolly of it, Vratz.”

“ And why not ? it is my stepping-stone to fortune, and perhaps to power. I know you will never forsake me ; and your interest at court,—both here, in France, and in Sweden,—backed by a powerful fortune, may command any position for yourself, and will bestow some trivial boon upon him who may have assisted you.”

“ You shall not be forgotten ; and I hear that, if she were free, I could count upon her acquiescing in my offer.”

“ For this reason, that she is already so much yours, I would not have you mar your chance by suffering your name to appear in this affair ; as yet, both Stern and Borasky believe that I am engaged by you to raise men to serve in Spain or France ; rest quiet, let it be done, reap the benefit,—and if the worst comes to the worst, the witch’s prophecy will only come true, and that ugly Polander meet his predicted death in a foreign country. How many thousand soldiers die, that the general should reap all the glory and emolument ! Men are merely figures on the great chess-board of life—pawns, knights, bishops, castles,

and queens are swept away, and the king remains the monarch of the board, the only one who never perils his person until the conquest is nearly secure ;—so it is every day of our existence, and so it must ever remain, and so it has ever been.”

“ Yes,” said Konigsmark, “ that is true ; and it is a comfort to conscience to find the practice old. The gladiator, who expended his life that his liberal master might be applauded, was but a retainer, bound body and soul to his owner ; and even in death, if authors are to be believed, ‘ bright but pitiless eyes were amongst the thousands that looked down upon him, as he fearlessly pronounced his hopeless *Moriturus vos saluto.*’ ”

“ Then that is settled,” said Vratz, coolly, “ and Borasky may be hanged. At midnight, both Stern and the Pole will be here. I have placed this wine to give me the air of one who enjoys luxuries : common people remark comfort more than those accustomed to it. I shall urge them to revenge the insult done to me. I am their captain : the plan shall be mine, the arrangement mine, and I will see the deed done.

—After all, who is he but the friend of Monmouth, and the nominal husband of the Lady Elizabeth Percy ?”

“ Ay ! but rich, and that is being powerful ; and doubly so, since every one clings to Monmouth with the hope that he may yet be king.”

“ I never trouble myself about things which do not concern me, Count ! To you I am devoted ; through you I am in hopes to rise to riches and power, and ultimately again to discover the beautiful Isabella, and with her end my days.”

At the name of Isabella, a flush suffused the cheeks of Konigsmark, which was not unobserved by Vratz.

“ What, still constant, Vratz ?”

“ Always,” replied Vratz, “ constant to my master, constant to her I love, and as constant in revenge ! Have you never heard of her since she landed at Messina ?”

“ Never,” said Konigsmark ; “ but after the reception of your letter, I employed the captain of a felucca to inquire of José Vergani if she had ever arrived at Naples ; and I gave the man sufficient money to inspire Vergani with

the hope of further remittances if he should take care of her, and be useful to her. That her story was true, I cannot doubt ; and if I am to credit the captain, who seemed intimately acquainted with Vergani's former and present life, she could not have fallen into better hands, provided that he is disposed to deal honourably with her ; but sometimes.——”

“ Sometimes what ? ” interrupted Vratz.

“ Sometimes these low Italians sell handsome women at any market ; and she is as likely to become a sultana as Madam Vratz.”

“ And, being as constant in revenge as I am in love, I swear that if he does not render a true and good account to me, he shall be as sure to die as he whose fate we have decided upon to-night.”

“ It is time enough to talk of her when you are in a position to go in quest of her: my success will ensure your success. But as we are discoursing of women, are you quite sure that this Swede, this Stern, has no low woman dependent upon him, through whom a clue may be gained, and all his visits discovered ? ”

“ He seems a regular modest, virtuous gen-

tleman : he considers himself justified in committing any murder if he is ordered so to do,—and in this he differs not much from any other of our profession ; but as for any irregularities with women, he is so innocent, in all his bearings, that the very suspicion excites a blush upon his cheek.”

“ Then I doubt him,—for it is unnatural ; and extremes, we are told, meet,—so his modesty may be strangely allied to consummate levity. Hark ! that old clock loudly chimes the hour of eleven ; and, for fear of meeting these persons, and being recognised by them, I had better withdraw. It is an awful night, it blows a hurricane, and the big rain patters against the pavement, rebounding with its force, and making a double shower. I will carefully wrap myself in this huge cloak. Hark ! there are voices in the street !”

“ And what care we for voices ?”

“ By my soul ! it is in Swedish they talk ; they have mistaken the hour.”

“ No, it is ourselves who have lost one,—it was twelve that struck ; walk out boldly, and take no notice.”

"But after it is done?"

"Hah!"

"Inquire for me at Faubert's Academy, I have a brother there."

"Where is it?"

"At the upper end of the Haymarket; it is a riding-school."

"I tell you this is the den," said Stern, outside, "and this the window."

"Then tap hard enough to break it," said Borasky.

"This way, Count, through the bed-room; and as I let them in by this door, do you escape by that."

"Your hand, Vratz."

"It is yours, as true to you as man's can ever be. I will postpone the business; rest quiet at home. Good night!"

CHAPTER XVII.

"It rains and blows so hard that I don't wonder at your not hearing our tap at the window," said Stern. "Hark! the street-door banged."

"I must have failed to close it," said Vratz.

"I pulled it to myself," said Borasky.

"Then it blew open again, I suppose," said Vratz; "but we will see." He accordingly went out, and, having locked the door, took the same precaution with that of the bed-room; and remarked, carelessly,—"Nothing short of a Lapland witch could creep into the house now."

The remark made Borasky creep nearer to the fire, and his face became as pale as ashes.

"Cold and wet enough outside," said Vratz—who remarked the effect of his words—"to make a man into a snow-ball, if he were not melted by the rain. Fill up a glass each: you are both good and true men; the clock had scarcely told the hour before you were at the door. Punctuality is requisite in a soldier."

"Ah! that wine warms and revives me. What a night! As we came along, even those who live by the vilest of all trades were driven from their haunts, and we walked the deserted streets as if the plague had thinned the inhabitants. Borasky laughed at it."

"I am accustomed to such weather; and, after all, what is it but wind and water."

"Nothing," said Vratz, cheerfully; "but it is not comfortable to get under a water-spout in a hurricane. Fill your glass, my noble Pole; that is the generous liquor which thaws the most frozen heart. Sit down, man; why one would think you were a page in a palace, afraid to move for fear of incurring displeasure. Take off that cloak, and let us talk of business."

There was some real modesty in Borasky, who, quite unaccustomed to such apparent luxury, felt a modest diffidence in availing himself of the invitation.

“The wine was made to be drunk, the fire to warm us, the chairs to sit down upon,” remarked Stern; “and I shall do as the Captain bids me—’tis a good soldier who does as he is commanded. Come, Pole, put your glass this way; we shall talk better when the wine unbosoms our thoughts.”

The reader is already well acquainted with Vratz and Borasky—Stern’s history is shortly told in his own words, as taken before Sir John Reresby and William Bridgeman, magistrates.* “He had arrived in England seven months previously, and lodged at the Amsterdam ordinary. About five weeks afterwards, Captain Vratz came and took lodgings in the next room to him, and in a few days made acquaintance with him; and said—‘It is dear living here; but as long as I stay it shall cost you nothing: but still it is dear, and I will go lodge in

* *Causes Célèbres.*

another place. Accordingly, they went to a house in St. Nicholas Lane, where the Captain paid for him ; and the Captain said he had had a quarrel with a gentleman, with whom he would fight, and that he wanted a good servant or two." Stern volunteered to enter into his service ; and afterwards, when Borasky arrived, became his associate. As yet he was not fully enlightened as to the nature of his service.

" Right," said Vratz ; " and bear in mind that when this bottle is empty there are plenty more to take its place. If a person is not in bed such a villanous night as this, he cannot better employ himself than over a bottle, with a friend or two to share its contents."

" Ah ! Captain," said Stern, " I am not the man to contradict you. Now, Pole."

Vratz, who saw that both these good servants of his were very much inclined to do ample credit to his cellar, thought it advisable, before the mind was clouded, and whilst the blood was properly warmed, to introduce his subject. " It is well for you," he began, " with light hearts and merry countenances, to drink wine and smoke pipes ; and I can believe it worth

while to get wet, in order to dry before so good a fire : but my mind is ill at ease."

"What's the matter, my noble Captain?" said Stern.

"You know I told you both how insulted I had been, by having six men set upon me in a foreign land to murder me, and that I lived only in the hopes of revenge."

"That is not an article which costs much in any market," said Borasky.

"But it will cost me much ;—such as sleepless nights ; honour wounded—deeply, deeply wounded,—the frown of my friends ; the malice of my enemies. It does appear to every man that I am afraid to seek my rival,—when that rival disclaims my equality of rank, and will not entertain the duel."

"A paltry vagabond," said Stern, "who is willing to hide his cowardice under the garb of his rank."

"If a man wont give satisfaction," said Borasky, as he puffed out a volume of smoke, "it is not so difficult to take it."

"But he goes armed, with many servants ; and one man cannot approach him."

"But one out of three might," said Borsky.

"It might be arranged for two to keep his retinue off, whilst the third fired upon him," said Stern.

"And then gallop away," said Vratz, "and leave the astonished servants to console their cowardly master."

"Or have a regular fight with all the servants, declaring our intentions," said Stern.

"No, that would not answer, as we might be taken by the officers; and what chance should we poor foreigners have against one so high and so rich? This is a country where the nobles tread upon the plebeians,—where pride spurns poverty,—where the great can insult the lower orders,—and where it is a crime to be revenged: but we are of a free country, and we join together to assist each other. You are now in my cause, as I should be in yours, were you my captain and I one of your servants. Here, indeed, one law exists which exonerates the retainer: the master is responsible for the act, and the servant who obeys the command is justified."

"Is that the law, good Captain?" said Borasky.

"Even so, good Pole; and had I my books here, I could at once make you convinced of the fact. Therefore, if in this *mêlée* you fire and kill him who has insulted me, your Captain, you are justified in so doing; and any penalty—if penalty there be—falls upon my head."

"I shall do as I am desired," said Stern.

"And I shall not be backward in obeying my orders."

"And you shall be well remunerated for it," said Vratz, quickly; "and as afterwards you are to join the service of the great Count Konigsmark, by whose orders I have enlisted you,—for he always remembers those he has known, and considers himself under some obligation to you relative to times long past,—he has desired me to present you with a sword, a coat, and other accoutrements becoming one of his rank. We must manage to meet this man after dark."

"It would be better," said Stern, "as then we may better guard against detection."

"But we must do it on horseback, in order better to effect our escape. Can you ride, Polanders?"

"Any animal, from an elephant to a weazel, provided it be strong enough to bear me."

"If this happens on Sunday," said Stern, "it is illegal to ride."

"No, not after the sermon-time," said Vratz.

"Are you sure of the law?" inquired Stern; "for it would make but a sorry laugh against us, if we came clattering up the streets seeking our revenge, and were to be put into prison as foreigners profaning the Sabbath."

"I am certain of the law, or I would not venture on such a day."

"Past one o'clock, and a stormy morning!" cried the watchman, close to the window.

"Hush! for your lives!" said Vratz, as he placed his finger on his mouth: "he might hear."

"And if he did," said Borasky, "he would not understand. One might go from this to the other end of England and not find four people, but mariners, who could speak Swedish."

Vratz recovered himself, when the footfall of the watchman was no longer heard. Such ever is guilt,—alarmed at imaginary danger,—scared even by the voice of an infant. In order not to show the little agitation which had instantaneously assailed him, Vratz took a glass of wine, and produced another bottle.

“Time flies fast when one is comfortable,” said Stern: “we shall have the city to ourselves on our return.”

“If it were not for this substantial bottle,” said Borasky, “I should say the sooner we get home the better. Do not forget the sword and the coat, good Captain.”

“Fear me not, Polander; and the Lieutenant (Stern was always called the lieutenant) shall buy you sufficient arms to-morrow, whilst I look out for three good creditable horses.”

“Let us have it all arranged now,” said Stern, “and then each man will know with what it is most requisite to supply himself.”

“Arms,” said Vratz, “arms of all convenient size—one musketoon well charged, a pair of pistols each, a sword, and a further resource in the small fire-arms, and we might

march against a file of soldiers. It is impossible to lay down a plan when we do not know when or where the affray may occur ; but I will be on the watch, and you shall both be informed together. Where do you lodge now ?”

“ At the Black Bull, in Holborn,” replied Stern.

“ It is a good situation, and one from which we can easily escape.”

“ Why should we escape ?” asked the simple-minded Borasky ; “ you say we are justified in this act,—if so, why are we to run away ?”

“ Methinks, good Polander, you should have been a lawyer. There is a nice discrimination between guilt and innocence ; and it might please the people to bring us before a jury, and thus annoy us by long delays, whilst all of us are wishing to be abroad. As for guilt in a duel, there is none ; all people of quality fight, if merely to prove they are not cowards. It is a fashion, like the King’s wig or his favourite patches—everybody must fight or have fought a duel ; but mine is not for fashion—mine is for an unmerited attack upon me. Hired ruffians were set upon me, and, but for the gal-

lantry of my companion, and the good use of my own sword, I might now have been buried in a French ditch, with not even a cross erected to point out the spot where the murder was committed. I will attack this man with his own weapons,—as he laid wait for me so will I lay wait for him ; and the clock shall not mark the termination of the third day from this minute, before I am avenged. You talk of his riches ! Are riches to give permission for murder ?—Is a rich man to trample a poor one from this world, as worms are crushed by careful gardeners ?—Am I, a Captain in three armies of three different nations, of so little value that a man who counts in gold may count the minutes of my life ?—Take another glass ; I grow too warm upon this insult,—but few can remain cool and feel all the pangs of unrevenged injury.”

“ That is a truth I can avouch,—for I have had my wrongs, and cannot right them.”

“ And am I, do you think,” said Stern, “ in such flourishing circumstances as never to have been trod upon ? This deed, although it will not avenge me, will tend to soothe my

mind, in seeing justice decide the fate of another."

"We all feel," said Vratz, "when a friend is injured, as if that injury were inflicted on one's self;—as both of you assist me, so will I assist you. War has been my trade,—and I followed it under a bold master: success has made me less fearful of events,—and from my number of hair-breadth escapes I might imagine that my death was not to be by fire."

"Nor by the water!" said Stern, with an expressive look.

"Ah! that reminds me that, years ago," remarked Borasky, "the same idea was uppermost in the Captain's brain, when he recommended me to avoid the witch's prophecy, by hanging myself that minute. It was a fine morning's walk I took with the Count Konigsmark, and resolutely he determined to find out his own fate."

"And it's nearer being accomplished now than ever. The fire gets low," said Vratz, "shall I add more fuel?"

"No, no!" said Stern, with some impatience, "I have remained longer than I ought

to have done already. This cheerless night grows worse and worse."

"The wind sings loudly," said Borasky, "and the rain dances merrily to the earth. But come,—what fear we wind or rain? A comfortable sleep will give time to recruit ourselves and dry our clothes."

"Good night to you, good Polander; Stern will conduct you home; to-morrow I shall be nearer to you. Good night! again."

Vratz had some difficulty in closing the door, on account of the violence of the wind; three minutes afterwards he was in bed, and nearly asleep. His life had hardened him against such events; and his thoughts of future actions never annoyed him, beyond the plan and the completion—both these had been arranged.

On leaving Nicholas Lane, the watchman, wrapped up in coats sufficient to defy a water-spout, stopped, and remarked,—“A bad night, gentlemen, for walking homewards.” Stern answered as concisely as possible; but the guardian of the night, for a wonder, had not slept in his box, but had listened to the foreign gentlemen’s conversation, although he did not

understand a word, and his remark was made to encourage an answer, in order to see if the late carousers were or were not all foreigners. The answer of Stern convinced him as far as he was concerned, and only one word from Borasky was equally decisive as to the second. No sooner had they walked on than he returned to the house ; and, knocking at the window, obtained a chance of admission by Vratz asking in broken English who disturbed him ? The careful guardian adverted to the light still burning ; and sought only to warn the gentleman of such an event, as he might not have known it.

Vratz was a civil man ; and in his own language consigned the watchman to another place over which Cerberus keeps guard ; banged the door, and went to bed. Foreigners were suspicious characters after the Popish plot.

Stern and Borasky walked quickly homewards : the former avoiding as much as possible the wet—the latter, as if enjoying himself after the manner of ducks, walked carelessly for-

ward, humming an old Polish song, and apparently quite unconcerned about the tempest.

"That watchman," said Stern, "looked at us with scrutiny; and, by my faith, Borasky, it would be difficult to forget your appearance."

"He is welcome to remember it," said the Pole. "I observed that you turned away from the lantern."

"It dazzled my eyes too much," replied the Swede.

"Then your eyes must be very weak," retorted the Pole.

"Yes; but my precaution perhaps was stronger. How fearfully it blows! half the chimneys in the town will be blown down, and she will be perished."

"Who is she?" asked Borasky.

"One with whom I would speak a word this night. I shall find her close to the inn."

"What, a woman!" exclaimed Borasky.

"Why, what would you have it be? a she goat, or a tabby cat?"

"And you have kept her waiting in this dreary night all this time?"

"Not exactly: she has only been there since one o'clock."

"And hark! the church is now striking two—poor soul, I feel for her."

"I beg you will not," said Stern. "There, yonder is the inn; get ye home; I will return in an hour—to-morrow we will breakfast together."

Borasky walked to the door, as Stern turned up a narrow passage and whistled—a half-smothered voice was borne upon the rushing wind in answer; and Stern, giving another sharp whistle, rapidly advanced. In a minute the wet folds of a woman's dress met his hand, as he groped his way up the dark alley; and, hastily begging forgiveness, in broken English, for the delay, he took her arm under his, and pursued the way towards St. Paul's.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"It was unkind to keep me here so long," began the female; "but I care not for it, so long as you are faithful. What could have kept you in so dreadful a night; and who is your new companion who walked home with you?"

"A poor fellow, whom I want to enlist for the wars in France."

"Are men so scarce that others must sit up past midnight to secure them?"

"When birds are dazzled they come to the glass and the net is drawn over them; so men, when their imaginations get excited, are easily involved in any scheme."

"Ah, well," said the girl, "you men have

always excuses : they say that belongs to our sex, but you foreigners seem to understand it well ; it comes naturally to you."

"Talk, Jane, of other things. What will your mistress say to your being out so late?"

"Say," replied the girl,—“why she would say that I need not try the key in the door, and might find a home elsewhere.”

“That would not be difficult whilst I lived,” said Stern.

“Ah, you are all kindness ; and never forget me.”

“No, dearest. Oh ! I had forgotten, I must go back to the inn directly.”

“That is more than I can do : I must go home.”

“Here is the money I promised for your new dress, Jane. To-morrow I will come near your house, and do you creep out.”

“It is useless your doing so : I always work in a back room ; you can try, if you like. There, don't be foolish, but go,” continued Jane, as she playfully repulsed a second attempt to impress an adieu on her lips.

“You will find money enough in the purse,

Jane ; but don't throw that away ; it's an old favourite of mine. Good night."

"Ay, good night," said Jane ; "and a precious fool you are," she continued to herself. Lord, how easily these men are deceived. I verily believe that foreigneering fellow believes me to be a lady's-maid. I wish a public-house was open. Here, you Swedish man," she called out, "at the same place and time to-morrow."

"Certainly, my dear," said Stern, and strode off ; it having suddenly occurred to him that Borasky, who was rather elevated in spirits, might be drawn into a conversation by either the chamber-maid or the man-servant at the inn.

No sooner was Stern out of sight, than Jane turned to go towards the Tower.

"Halloa, young maiden,"—said the watchman of Nicholas Lane, who had followed the foreigners, and saw Borasky home, and then enacted spy upon the Swede and Jane,—“ what brings you out at this time of night, and in such weather ?”

"That, Mr. Sleepy," replied the girl, "which will take me back again—my legs."

"Mayhap they may take you to the watch-house first," replied the man. "Come, you must give some account of yourself. Oh! I see," said he, as he held the lantern close to her face, "Molly Brown, of Tower Hill—and sober, too. What mischief have you been up to?"

"Oh, don't bother, Mr. Charlie," the girl replied, coaxingly; "I have only been making that fellow believe I'm a lady's-maid in love with him, and getting a little money to buy a silk dress."

"We shan't quarrel, you know, Molly, about a trifle. Let's see what's in the purse he talked about? You know I'm not doing my duty by no means not to put you in the lock-up; it's contrary to all laws, and against good manners and men's honours, that you should be wandering about the streets in such a sterm. Why, you might be drowned in the gutters, if you were 'toxicated, as usual, and then the parish would have to pay for your funeral. We

sha'n't quarrel, Molly. Let's see, my lady's-maid."

"Indeed I sha'n't though, Mr. Charlie—not I : if any house was open, I could stand a treat for some liquor ; but as for examining my purse, no man shall do that."

"Well, then, Molly, you know I have a house which opens to my knock, and there you can remain very happily until the Justice see how you came possessed of a gentleman's *purse*, not to mention the money. Don't be kicking and flinging about like a fish out of water, or I may call some others, and then you will have to pay double, or go to our lodgings, which we let to many of you, like civil gemmen, for nothing all night."

"Well, I think it's very hard that I, an innocent girl, am to be robbed by one who ought to protect me."

"You don't take me to be quite so soft a fellow as that foreigneering chap, do you ?—innocent girl ! Ay, no doubt a hard-working, honest, industrious young female, just come up from the country, and lady's-maid to a Duchess, living in Duck Lane ! None of your nonsense, Miss

Innocence, or home you go with me. We all know you. Who do you think will believe your story? Why, you've been afore the Justices as many times as there is minutes in the day. Come, there's honour amongst us all; give us half-profits, and upon my soul I wont say a word about it."

"Half what I have in my purse?"

"Harkee, Molly, it isn't every gentleman who would waste his time and neglect his duty for half; but I was always reasonable with you, young woman—it's my weakness. I can't abide your tears; when you kisses me, I melts away like butter in summer. Suppose I take you to the watch-house: you are one of the bad characters, you know; and this man, who believes you a modest young woman, would never come forward to tell the truth: you would be caged, for one thing; and, as sure as the Judges sit at Westminster, you would be hanged for the other;—so if you think your neck is worth more than your back, save the one, and let the other go about in a cotton gown. Now, that's what I call better advice than the Judge gives, when he says, 'You shall have a clergy-

man to attend you, and not to waste your time, as there can be no hopes held out.' Do you understand?—you've seen many of your friends swing for less. Hanging must be quite comfortable, since you seem to risk it for such a trifle. 'And, besides, if he's such a fool to give this, he'll give more—and none of us may be by to see it.'"

"I'll take precious good care of that. Don't take half, Mr. Charlie,—be content, that's a Christian, with a quarter. See what a dreadful night it is, and how cold and wet I am. Ah! our lives is dreadful, and no one pities us."

"Nonsense, don't I pity you!—In course I does. Every honest gemman feels for you; and if you had not us to protect you, where would you be, ungrateful creature that you is. Talk of cold! if the parish had not given me this great coat to sleep in, I wonder how I should have been, whilst I was keeping the city free of thieves, and cut-throats, and house-breakers, in my box. It was only my active curiosity, and having some difficulty of sleep since last execution, that set me a listening and splashing like a frightened wild duck. Come, Miss In-

nocence, pay up ; and let me tell you your keeping company with foreigners would not make the Justices or Judges more disposed to favour you. Where do you meet him to-morrow ?”

“ I sha’n’t say,” replied the girl.

“ Oh, you wont, wont you. Now, look here, my modest lady’s-maid, if I ask you again I will have three-quarters of what is in the purse ; and after that, if you refuse, I will take the whole, or, at any rate, you wont get a farthing of it. I’ll swear the man was drunk, and you robbed him.”

At the very thought of so decided a step, the poor miserable girl mentioned the hour and the place, and taking out the purse, burst into a real flood of tears, and told the man to take his half.

“ This aint genteel behaviour on your part, young woman,” said the watchman, as he received his exact moiety ; “ had you been taken by some of the others, you would have fared worse—those, I mean, who are so honest that they would get you hung, in order to receive the thanks of the parish for ridding it of a bad

character. And now," said he, as he seized the purse, "you may go home."

"Give me the purse, that's a good man," said the girl. "You heard him say I was not to lose that."

"I did, my dear, and that's the reason I shall keep it. You will have to come to me for it; and don't come without some more of those little purswading animals that we have shared to-night. Good-by! it's very cold here. 'Half-past three, and a stormy morning!' Get along with you, do; I shall lose my character if I am seen a-talking to such as you. You know where I live. When you want the purse you can call,—if it's after dark I am always to be found in my box. Good night, Miss Innocent!"

CHAPTER XIX.

It was now Sunday, the 12th of February, 1682.

The Black Bull contained, as a part of its inhabitants, Vratz, Stern, and Borasky. They breakfasted together, and ate and drank in solemn silence. No sooner was this over, than Vratz called Borasky apart, and, taking him into his bedroom, gave him a blunderbuss, which he desired him to load. Borasky, having put in the powder, received from Vratz five bullets; and Borasky remarked that they were small for so large a musket.

"Yes," said Vratz, "you are right, so put in the whole five,—it will do the business better. These pistols are a present to you,

and will be useful when you join the army of the Grand Monarque. Load them also; of what use is a weapon which is never ready? Now, here is this good sword,—with which you will yet cut out your own path, and become a great man. Methinks, Borasky, a better picture of a great warrior was never seen. You have the real martial look, and a determination in the eye which will not pass unnoticed by your captain.”

“Of what necessity is there for all these preparations in England, when we are to fight in France?”

“I told you before that we had to revenge our Captain’s quarrel here.”

“I understand,” replied the Pole, abstractedly;—“and when is that to be done?”

“Perhaps to-day, or to-morrow. I have desired Stern to go to Westminster to hire three horses, and in the afternoon we will ride out. Mayhap we may meet him; and mind you, whenever I say stop to the coachman, fire into that carriage. We must not stand to parley; for, when a man cannot screw up his courage to fight, it’s useless endeavouring to

goad him on. He is a worthless cur; and, although he rides in a carriage, is not the less a scoundrel and poltroon."

"It is a sorry affair, Captain," said the Pole, "and better becomes our master to do than ourselves. There can be no satisfaction in obtaining revenge through the means of another person."

"You grow fastidious, good Borasky. Now, how if one of base degree smote one of gentle blood—would you have him, with mayhap nobility in his veins, doff his cloak, and, like a portly coalheaver, bang about his adversary with vile blows; or would it not be more consonant with the dignity of the man to pay another coalheaver to drub him soundly? In the first instance, the nobleman would disgrace himself, and honour his adversary; in the latter he would have his insulter chastised, and think no more of the business."

"Why cannot Stern do this? he is paid more than myself."

"A good soldier does what he is commanded; and you will show how truly you merit that honourable rank by obedience to the

orders of your superiors. Does a soldier ask, why he fights? Has he any personal quarrel against the man he fires at, and destroys? Do men call that murder for which they are paid some two-pence per day—or does the veteran inquire if the quarrel is a just one? Look you, Borasky; in this world, everything is done with the hope of reward; from the lowest to the highest, that is the ruling power. Now, in this case, what is it but a lawful revenge for which you are to be most nobly remunerated?”

“It is a deed which strikes me as cowardly. If I had myself been insulted, I should not hesitate; for then I should feel I was justified.”

“And is not a soldier insulted, if his captain is insulted? Are not the honours won by the soldier given to the officer? Are not master and man as much one as man and wife? But all this is idle. Your reward is great; your future life one of ease and affluence; with a handsome uniform, to make that face of yours more valued. Tush! tush! Borasky; the women like the brave. I dare say you will marry a countess.”

At this moment, a knock was heard at the

bed-chamber door; and Vratz, putting his finger to his lips, to indicate silence, beckoned to Borasky to conceal the arms under the bed-clothes. A visible alarm was in his countenance, lest the Pole should, in his hurried excitement, which was evident, occasion the discharge of either piece. It required but a moment to place them in security; and Vratz opened the door.

The servant, with all the inquisitiveness of those of more modern days, seemed anxious to pry into the secret of the chamber—for the door had been bolted, and there was a certain degree of mystery which became doubly suspicious. Since the Popish plot, all foreigners were looked upon with some distrust; nor could any clue have been gained by the letter, which was written in Swedish—a language at that time, as now, very little spoken or studied in England. Vratz took the note, and, closing the door with some vehemence, turned the key. The contents of the note seemed of vast import, as Vratz withdrew from the Pole, and, after reading it again and again, destroyed every vestige. He saw the paper consumed in the

fire ; and as occasionally words can be traced on that which is not thoroughly burnt, he watched with impatience the progress of the flames, and breaking into small shreds whatever seemed inclined to adhere together, he left not one piece large enough to contain even a monosyllable. The contents of the letter was after this wise :—

“ *He* goes to visit the Countess of Northumberland, the widow of Earl Algernon, generally on Sunday, and alone. He returns along Pall Mall, about eight of the clock, for then he goes to the Duke of Monmouth. Mind, if the Duke should be in the carriage, do not molest him. Should it happen to-night, come to me at Rotherhithe, and bid the others fly in any direction. Destroy this carefully. My disguise will be known to you ; and I have reported that I am going to Windsor, although the king is at Whitehall. Fail not, good Vratz, for fortune awaits us both.” There was no signature, and the handwriting was disguised, but familiar to the reader.

Vratz sat down near the fire, and for some time spoke not a word. Borasky eyed him

with all the inquisitiveness of ignorance, and for at least a quarter of an hour not one word escaped either. At last, Vratz having studied the affair well, commenced—

“Go you, good Borasky, unto Stern, and tell him, when he has got the horses, to hire two boys to lead them for us; and ask him to have a sedan chair at my rooms at Westminster,—as I shall come there at dark. You must have your horse brought here, and must mount well armed, and meet us at Charing Cross, at half-past seven. My horse must be held in the Haymarket; but whilst it is light, neither of us must be together. If Stern is asked why we want the horses late, let him answer that we have engagements to sup near Putney, and that we shall return by nine; but, above all things, warn him of the danger of entering into conversation with any one, or of loitering about anywhere near Pall Mall. Bid him await me at the upper end of the Haymarket, about half-past seven, at which hour you must be at that spot. Look well to the priming of your musketoon, and be sure that the pistol flints are good. Take your

dinner at the Amsterdam ordinary, and if questioned as to your occupations, say you embark at four o'clock to-morrow for France, having come from Sweden upon merchants' accounts, relative to timber ; but be careful, if possible, to evade conversation, and if you could become deaf for the dinner time, it would avoid much suspicion. Go now at once to Stern ; you will find him walking opposite Whitehall, or between that and Westminster-bridge,—tell him of my arrangements. Do you understand them ?”

“All but the part concerning your rooms at Westminster. Perhaps you meant Nicholas lane ?”

“I meant what I said. Let your memory be faithful ; and remember, you are to carry all your arms ; and when I stop the coach, do you fire into it, which having done, ride away, going round in any winding course to the place which Stern will point out for the delivering of your horse ; then walk carelessly to the Black Bull, and go to bed. By to-morrow, at sunset, you shall be in France ; your pockets lined with gold, and your name mentioned well to

your Colonel. Remember the hour—half-past seven, at the top of the Haymarket.”

No sooner had Borasky departed than Vratz felt a glow of excitement. With him, little was requisite as to the justness of a cause, provided it was fraught with danger ; whatever was to happen, he would be there to assist ; and even now that he was prepared to commit a great crime, he drowned all apprehension of the result and consequences in the flattering belief that he should again discover Isabella, and yet claim her as his bride. It was strange that a woman could make any impression upon a heart so thoroughly devoid of feeling, and which only panted for scenes of strife and crime, where danger was the greatest, and where all the worst passions of our nature were roused to energy. Vratz cared little for means or consequences—the end was the object.

Left now alone, each companion in crime being separately engaged, Stern willing to aid and assist, and Borasky's slender intellect overruled by specious arguments, Vratz

began to calculate all chances ; he saw only the bright side of the picture. His master—for nothing could shake his reverence for his former master—was, in his eyes, a great man, —one well received at court, acquainted with most of the sovereigns of Europe, and in England an especial favourite of the king's, from his admiration of the sex, and his undeviating success. Moreover, his bravery was acknowledged, and his valorous deeds recorded ; how could such a man err ? Nay, even if the whole thing failed, it would be animadverted upon with mildness, and the whole would be considered as one of Count Konigsmark's mad adventures in the cause of gallantry ; it was right that the Count should be informed of the progress of the affair, and Vratz hastened to Faubert's Place, a new and temporary abode of Konigsmark, who, to avoid detection, shifted his quarters twice or thrice a-week, and invariably changed his disguise at each place. The Count was at home, and Vratz at once began the conversation. " Your letter was delivered to me, Count, and all arrangements are

made. I have seen the musquet and pistols loaded, and I can rely upon Stern and the Pole."

"But supposing they cannot effect their escape?"

"Then," replied Vratz, with consummate coolness, "they will be hung, and we shall go abroad."

"But their confession of the facts, Vratz?"

"Men going to be hung are always talked into a confession, which nobody believes, if it is against their opinion. A man condemned for murder makes a clean bosom of all the facts, but denies he did the act—who believes him? He is hung, dead, buried, and forgotten in an hour. Borasky was told by the witches he would be hung, so I presume he expects it. You believe in the star of your destiny, and that the ring is never to leave your finger until your death; and if I mistake not, your death is not to be the wasting away of life by age or infirmity. Now, Count, you are just the man who would rather be murdered than that the prophecy should prove untrue."

"Not quite, Vratz; but one does cling long

to early impressions ; but, to be candid with you, I would rather share in the adventure."

" If you do, I shall retire from it ; as yet, you are unknown in the affair, and I count upon you to save me, if requisite ; as for the others, Stern is poor, and tired of life, and Borasky would rather be hung than throw discredit upon the Lapland witches. Let the thing go on, and by nine o'clock to-night you will have another chance for the heiress. She is in Holland, and you can cross thither. It would be better if you left England to-night."

" No," replied Konigsmark, " I will await events. The moment it is done, I shall retire to Gravesend, or somewhere away from the noise and the bustle, and we shall be able to meet and arrange our future plans. How does Borasky think of this affair ?"

" Like all weak-headed men, whose hearts are greater than their intellects, he reasons upon it, and likes it not ; but one sentence revolutionized his morals ; and at the conclusion, he would have cut any man's throat if his master told him to do it. Never was a man better fitted for the execution of either himself or his

neighbour. By my faith, good Count, that wig is marvellously well fashioned to conceal any man of light hair and fair complexion ; if I did not know the sound of the voice, I should doubt my own eyesight."

" I have two others, which form a still better mask ; but in this country——"

" Ah ! Count," replied Vratz, interrupting him, " it would have been a more sensible precaution to have published your return to the continent, even if you stayed behind to see Borasky hung ; and this I shall certainly do, if the poor fellow does thus forfeit his existence ; he ought to have a respectable assembly to address at the last moment, and a look of recognition from an old friend keeps up the spirits of the culprit. I have told him how to escape, and Stern will take care to lead the retreat."

" And as for yourself ?"

" Never think of me : when the deed is done, I shall be the most clamorous to detect the offenders, and take care, if I see them pursued, to block up the way, in my energetic desire to go forward. I have been in too many scrapes to fear this. My object is to serve you, and in

so doing I never think of myself. Ah ! but I count the minutes with a boyish impatience. Once in comparative affluence, I will roam the world to find my Isabella ; and woe betide that man who has trifled with her feelings ! We have all our hopes in this existence, and mine are to make that woman my wife, and to live with her, no matter in what country."

" But supposing she finds her father, and becomes a great personage ?"

" I will win her at any hazard, and it is for her now that I have ventured into this plot ; for having served you, I know my reward will be affluence and independence. Hark ! it is now four o'clock ; I must see Stern, and take counsel. Farewell, Count ; by nine this evening."

No sooner had Vratz retired, than Konigsmark began to perceive he was raising up a formidable enemy to himself in the lover of Isabella ; and he mused over the coming tragedy, believing that the discovery of Vratz would place him in rather greater security. Changing his dress entirely, and taking from a drawer a wig he had never

shown to Vratz, and garbing himself entirely as became a dependent or lackey of that day, he looked from his window on the now fast closing light ; the heavy evening fog and the slight drizzling rain rendering it darker and more obscure every moment.

Vratz having met Stern, the plan was somewhat altered ; and in order not to render the lieutenant discontented, the propositions were readily accepted. Vratz returned to the Black Ball, and there finding Borasky, and being joined by Stern, the three, pretending to be utter strangers to the town, inquired their way to Temple Bar, and were afterwards seen walking along the Strand, going in the direction of Stern's lodgings. Here they remained until Stern went for the horses, which he brought, riding one, and leading the other two.

It was now six o'clock, and dark ; but, as the riders left the street, one person might have been found loitering in it. It was the unfortunate girl who had been obliged to share the contents of her purse with the watchman. Stern was evidently captivated with her charms,

and believed her the modest maid she had represented herself ; they had met far away an hour previously, and with the curiosity of all women, she had dogged his steps, and traced him home. She had inquired of a neighbour if he lodged there, and was busily employed weaving a mesh of love to entrap him. Love very often leads its votaries into sad scrapes. Close behind her was the watchman himself, who, finding she had left her former lodgings, had kept a vigilant look-out for her : meeting her unobserved in the street, he had followed her, and was now dogging her to her new abode.

CHAPTER XX.

It was now seven o'clock. The night was dark, and the drizzling rain kept people at home. London was then a vile, ill-lighted, dirty town; and Pall-Mall, now the admiration of Europe, but a dingy lounge. Near the corner, where now stands the United Service Club, and which was then the termination of a narrow dirty lane, stood a man muffled up carefully to avoid the cold—so high, indeed, had the folds of the cloak covered his face, that one hand kept the cloth at sufficient distance from the mouth, to avoid suffocation. Many had passed him by, but he was unobserved; for, on hearing a footstep approaching, he walked on with rapid stride, stopping, and

turning to regain his position whenever the stranger was sufficiently distant. Not long had he thus manœuvred before he heard the sound of horses' feet, and, creeping close to the corner, remained concealed.

"This will be about the place," said a voice, easily recognised as that of Vratz. "Place yourself here, good Pole—and you, lieutenant, in the front. I will ride on and watch for the advance of the carriage, and be you both ready when I stop it." He rode forward.

"It is cold to-night," remarked the Pole. "I would this business were well over. Which way did he bid me ride?"

"You are to gallop up the Haymarket, and winding to the left, get round to Westminster—there leave the horse. I shall be there before you, for I shall go by Whitehall. Hark! I hear the whistle."

"It is his," said the Pole; "and now, methinks I hear the noise of the wheels; and yonder, see, are the running footmen carrying their flambeaux. The light might make the horses start, and misdirect my aim."

"Keep cool and firm; ride close before you

fire. I will keep off the servants by dashing towards them. See, they are coming to this point ; the captain will be here first and stop the carriage."

The heavy, unwieldy vehicles used in the time of Charles II. were admirably constructed to favour the murder about to be committed. Built not unlike our Lord Mayor's carriage, they offered no panel to conceal the occupant ; he sat conspicuous to public gaze ; and, by night, the flare of the flambeaux, carried by the running footmen, who always attended upon the rich and great, rendered a mistake of person scarcely possible. Neither did the coachmen of those days hurry their horses at the terrific rate which now renders every crossing an enterprise of danger. In the time to which we refer, a very slow, dignified trot enabled the runners to keep up with the carriage, and no increase of pace could be long continued without danger of leaving the lights and the retinue in the mud behind.

Borasky drew forth the fatal musquet, holding it across his saddle. Stern moved a little in advance ; and, as Vratz galloped up, he pro-

nounced, fearlessly and aloud, "It is he— and alone. Be ready, Pole; I will stop him here." He then crossed to Stern, and said, "Be ready with your pistols, for the Pole might fail; and we must not endanger our lives without making sure work of it. Stand to your arms."

Vratz now was exactly in the way of the carriage. Borasky, with his horse's head towards St. James's-street, was on the left of the coming carriage, thus having his right arm left free; and Stern, on the other side, spurred his horse and kept tight his rein, so as to move him to his mettle.

"Halloa! you vagabond coachman!" called Vratz, as the carriage approached, "are you going to drive over me?"

The coachman instantly stopped his horses, and Mr. Thynne advanced towards the middle window to ascertain the cause of this interruption. Borasky hearing Stern cry "*Now!*" and observing him ride at the servants, shouting to them to stand aside, rode deliberately to the carriage window, and firing his musquet close to the unfortunate occupant, lodged the con-

tents in his victim, who, giving a sudden shriek, instantly fell back.

The crime was no sooner committed than the man who had secreted himself stole away. The horsemen took to flight by different routes ; and the astonished servants, overcome by such a sudden transaction, remained gazing at each other. This state of alarm soon subsided. A messenger was sent to the Duke of Monmouth. Perhaps it is better to borrow the following from the author of the *Causes Célèbres* : “ On the night of Sunday, the 12th February, 1682, all the court end of London was startled by the news that Thynne had been shot, passing along the public streets in his coach. The spot was towards the eastern extremity of Pall-Mall, directly opposite to St. Alban’s-street, no longer to be found, but which occupied nearly the same site with the covered passage, now called the Opera-arcade. St. Alban’s-place, which was at its northern extremity, still preserves the memory of the old name. King Charles, at Whitehall, might almost have heard the report of the assassin’s blunderbuss ; and so

might Dryden, sitting in his favourite front room, on the ground floor of his house, on the south side of Gerrard-street."

The report of this murder was soon communicated to the King, who happened to hold a court that evening ; and loud and general were the remarks on such an unusual and horrible transaction. Orders were given to use the utmost vigilance in detecting the perpetrators of this diabolical deed ; and Sir John Reresby, who happened to be at court, received a summons, by the Duke of Monmouth's page, to attend at the death-bed of Mr. Thynne, and to gain all information on the subject.

It was marvellous how this report spread over the metropolis. The occurrence took place at half-past seven o'clock, and by ten it was the subject of conversation amongst all classes. The anti-court party loudly murmured that Thynne's friendship with the Duke of Monmouth had procured him this unenviable fate ; and more or less, in all societies, a political importance was connected with the deed.

In vain did Sir John Reresby question the

servants. The only one (whose name was Cole) who pursued the murderer as far as the upper part of the Haymarket, could give no further account of him but that he heard him, or others on horseback, speak in an outlandish tongue ; but he could not describe either the general appearance or the features of the murderer.

Mr. Thynne died in the course of the night, suffering extreme agony ; and a sufficient reward was offered instantly for the discovery of the murderer.

Count Konigsmark, disguised as Vratz had seen him, was now at his own lodgings in Crown-street, Westminster. He was lounging carelessly in his large arm-chair, which nearly occupied all the space of the small apartment ; his boots, which he had drawn off, were near the fire, covered thick with London mud, and a large Spanish cloak, which hung over another chair, appeared as if just taken off,—for the night was drizzly, and thousands of those marks of mists which wet to the skin ran from the cloth. On the table was a bottle of brandy and some water ; and the Count, pass-

ing his hand over his forehead, after having taken a deep drink, murmured to himself, "He is removed,—that stumbling-step to my ambition is gone!—I saw him fall back. And now, to rid myself of the vermin, which in these deeds are always requisite;—we strike with the hands of others! I set one, eager for reward, upon the track of Vratz; and, like a hound upon the scent, he wound his way through slippery streets—for Vratz was aware he was pursued. If the affair of Isabella ever came to light, that heart of his,—once mine, and faithfully mine,—would be bitterly my enemy. Thus it is with us all: we wind a mesh of mischief around us to gain our ends, and then are alarmed at the very cobwebs we have spun. I will think no more upon it. Ah! there are footsteps in the street;—and what of that!—Do not people walk in a great metropolis at all times?—and yet now I feel my heart beat as it never beat before. I would I had challenged himself for a forced affront—and then the death had not been murder, but honourable revenge! Men give different significations to the same event; but then, as Vratz remarked, it was unlikely

that she would wed the man whose hands were red with her husband's blood. Again!—and this time the sound is of a man at speed;—he stops!”

Konigsmark leapt from his chair; and taking the boots and cloak, and all that could betray his having walked—as only the guilty walk, unheeding their footfall—he placed them in an adjoining bed-room; and, with the composure of one accustomed to command himself, he again lounged in his chair.

This time his guilty conscience did not give a false alarm,—a summons at the door, given with a rapid succession, warned him that a stranger was there. It was useless to evade the summons—the lights in the room showed the house inhabited; and at that apartment he kept no servant. It was answered by some one connected with a lodger on the first floor; in an instant his door was opened, and Vratz, breathless from his speed, advanced into the room. Konigsmark's signal implored the silence which the hard panting enforced: the door was shut, and the retiring footstep heard upon the staircase. The Count pointed

to a chair, and to the bottle. Vratz seized the latter, and took a hasty draught.

"What bad news do you bring in such haste?" began Konigsmark, with a marvellous coolness of expression.

"Bad!" ejaculated Vratz. "By the Virgin! nothing was ever more cleverly done;—if now we can but hang Borasky, or ship him off instantly, we are safe."

"Ay; but the rumour is so rife, and the dogs of justice so quick, that to move him now would be impossible.—Where is he?"

"In bed, if he is wise, at the Black Bull."

"And Stern?"

"In King-street,—hereabouts."

"I would he were further," said the Count.

"And you, Vratz?"

"I am going to a lodging I took yesterday in Leicester-Fields."

"You have well divided the party. What clue can there be to the discovery?"

"None; without, in the flight, that stupid Pole allowed his ugly face to be seen—and no one could ever mistake that—or dropped his blunderbuss in his eagerness to get off; or one

of the thousand chances which beset all adventures of difficulty. But why trouble ourselves about this?—What is done, is done; and now we had better make the most of it. Do you, good Count, fly to Gravesend, and you will be as difficult to find as myself; or perhaps it would be better to go to the Court, and there you will gain intelligence as to the thoughts of people. I had forgotten to tell you that I did but narrowly escape, for I was pursued by one quick of limb: but I leapt from the horse as it galloped, giving the frightened beast a lash, and, concealing myself at a corner, saw my pursuer, who had got two or three in his hunting expedition, pass. I then took another direction, and, turning through a thousand streets, got here. I ran hard, when the street was deserted; but wherever there were people I lounged carelessly along; at one time imitating a lame man—at another, carrying my jerkin as a bundle; sometimes bent down apparently with age, and at another walking on tiptoe, looking six feet. It would not be one man who would take the Captain Vratz."

"It would be bad for us to be seen together,"

resumed the Count. "Walls have ears; and the maid who let you in has sharp eyes."

"And a pretty face withal, good Count. Had I not been in a hurry, I should have chucked her under the chin—all women love attentions. Now I shall take my leave."

"Will not the horse betray you?"

"No, that was well managed: the beast ran homeward; and Stern was so disguised when he hired him, that all the grooms in the universe would never know him again."

"Go, go! Vratz—I would have your company for ever, if we were clear of this land; but whilst here our connexion would, or might, be dangerous. You know where to find me. I think I had better go to-night."

"No, remain quiet; even now the whole city is alarmed: and from the manner men meet and talk of this event, one would imagine a second Popish plot had exploded; and who knows but that, being foreigners, we might be suspected. If any man asks me a question, I shall be deaf and dumb. The rest of the plot remains with you,—and you must reap the advantage. Good night, Count,—but just allow

me to resume my acquaintance with this bottle; I never part bad-friends with anything." He drank as those drink who covet false excitement. Light as was his manner, there lurked beneath an inward feeling of apprehension; for he who does a deed against the law, and at variance with his conscience, believes every eye is upon him, and fears even the conversation of a child.

"This is about as nice a job as ever poor fellows had to discover," said one watchman to another. "Have you seen anything like a murderer, with a blunderbuss, come this way on tiptoe, Charlie?—have you?"

The person addressed is already known to the reader; and answered,—“What’s dead now? and who’s the coroner?”

“Never was such an act committed within the memory of mortal man.” And, with a thousand embellishments, Mr. Charlie was made acquainted with the details; with the common additions, always accumulated as the story, like a snow-ball, rolls on, increasing in size.

“On horseback, did you say, George?”

“Ay,—three of them.”

"And foreigners, George?"

"All on 'em spoke a language no mortal man could understand. Some says it was Russian,—some, that it was the Grand Turk's lingo; and one fellow declared it was like what the black man spoke, when he was showed at a penny a-head."

"And there is a good reward, is there, Master George?"

"Enough to set you up in arm-chairs and sausages for the rest of your nat'ral life."

"And one was short, and t'other two tall?"

"So they says, Charlie; but I doubts if any one saw much of them, but the dead man and the coachman: the first wont say much as to 'dentification, and the other shut his eyes so close that it's a chance if ever he sees daylight again."

"And all three were together, George?—all on 'em at the Haymarket, or thereabouts?"

"Just so; and now I think I have told you as much as will do to talk about for a week. Why you look as knowing as a crow as just sees a worm a-coming up to be eaten."

"Good night, Master George.—Twelve o'clock, and a cloudy night!"

"Good night, Master Charlie.—One o'clock, and a fine morning!—no, I don't think it is, either;—he is a sharp fellow, that Charlie: his beat have one hour more to live than mine; and that's how he flatters mankind in their sleeps."

"Come, Miss Innocent," said Mr. Charlie, as he entered very unceremoniously into the miserable apartment of a lady with whom he had conversed on a former night; "here's a job as will make you a duchess's maid in right earnest." He held his lantern close to the face of the poor wretch, who had for once retired to bed at so early an hour, and who slept with all the heaviness of half-intoxication. "Come, open your eyes and shut your mouth, or else your breath might catch fire, it does smell so wondrously of gin; here's ruin a-staring you in the face, and you're a-snoring like an asthmatic puppy. Your man,—he as believes you the duchess's maid, and who gave you the purse, has been murdered, and nobody knows where to take his corpse to: we might

get something handsome by telling his family, and I'll share it honourably with you. Where does he live?"

The girl, (sobered somewhat from the sudden rousing, the lantern, and the loss of her only friend,) instantly replied,—“He sleeps in King-street, Westminster, to-night.”

“I know that as well as you. Come, now, deal fairly with me, and so will I with you: give me half of what you got from him before he went out to ride.”

“He gave me very little, because he paid for the horses.”

“Horses, woman!—why, who ever heard of a gemman who rode half a dozen horses at once?”

“There were only two besides his,” replied the girl, “for friends of his.”

“What! foreigneering fellows, as speaks unintelligible lingos?”

“Yes. But is he murdered? and he was to meet me to-morrow, at twelve o'clock, at Temple-bar, and to have given me some money.”

“You'll never see no more of him than might hang on a gibbet, and be mistaken for

a murderer's skeleton. There, go to sleep; you do seem as if you had not much more than you wanted. Now, let me advise you to keep better company for the future; for I suspects you've been at the bottom of this, and perhaps have got another purse: but if you have not, this one will be sufficient to condemn you."

"Oh, Mr. Watchman! what do you mean?"

"I means what I says. Informers get rich; and if so be that the sheriff does require a victim, why the purse, and the conversation you had with him, and now this murder,—but I'll call to-morrow, and talk it over. So, good night."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE slight incident of the watchman having watched the girl, with the intention of robbing her, led to the discovery of Thynne's murderers; and Borasky, having dropped the blunderbuss which Vratz had bought, and which was traced to him, began to form a chain of evidence sufficiently strong to place all the parties at the bar of justice. The watchman's low cunning having elicited the place of residence of Stern, he left his beat and directed his steps westward. Even after midnight, groups about Whitehall talked loudly about the murder; and from one of these the watchman overheard that Sir John Reresby was gone to Mr. Thynne's house, and was busily employed in examining the servants,

He soon learnt the residence of the expiring man—for Thynne did not die until six o'clock in the morning—and, desiring to see the magistrate, and having ascertained about the reward, he unburthened his mind of its knowledge; detailed everything, from the meeting in Nicholas-lane to the last information of the unfortunate girl. A warrant was instantly issued; and Stern was arrested before daylight, having not an hour previously parted with Vratz.

Stern confessed he was present at the affair, and implicated Vratz and Borasky, giving information as to their residence; and in twelve hours from the committal of the murder the three were in custody. Vratz maintained his usual coolness. He declared that Thynne had insulted him and refused to fight; and that he went out purposely to waylay him, and force him to a duel. Borasky, in his cross-examinations, mentioned the name of Count Konigsmark. Ten thousand rumours instantly were spread.—The Count was arrested.

In the London Gazette, for Thursday, 16th of February, Count Konigsmark was thus ad-

vertised :—"The same Count Konigsmark is aged about twenty-five or twenty-six years, of a low stature, pretty full-set, fair long hair, (but sometimes wears a perrwig,) a round face, with a few pock-holes in it. Whoever does discover him, so he may be put in the hands of justice, shall receive £200 reward."

About eight o'clock on Sunday, the 19th, he was taken at Gravesend. On the 27th, the Grand Jury, at Hicks's Hall, found a true bill; and on the following day the four were placed at the bar. Borasky, Vratz, and Stern, as principals in the murder; and Charles John Count Konigsmark, as accessary before the fact.

In the opening speech of the counsel for the prosecution, the following is found, which fills up the gap between the last meeting between Vratz and Konigsmark and their appearance at the bar. After entering into details concerning the three principals, Sir Francis Withers, the counsel, thus proceeds:—"This, gentlemen of the jury, is the principal sum of the evidence that will be given against the three principals. For the fourth, gentlemen, (Count Konigsmark,) he is a person of great

quality, and I am extraordinary sorry to find the evidence so strong against him as my brief imports. I wish his innocence was greater, and our evidence less—for he is a person of too great quality, one would hope, to be concerned in a thing of this nature ; but that he was the main abettor and procurer of this barbarous business we shall prove, upon these grounds : first, that he had a design upon Mr. Thynne's life;—for, gentlemen, coming into England about three weeks before this matter was transacted, first, he lies in disguise, and lives private, and removes his lodgings from place to place frequently ; that he did inquire of the Swedish resident, whether or no if he should kill Mr. Thynne in a duel, he could, by the laws of England, afterwards marry Lady Ogle ? So that Mr. Thynne's death was in prospect from the beginning. Gentlemen, we shall prove to you,—as I did in some measure open before,—that the Count himself was pleased to give express orders that the Polander should have a good sword bought him ; that, before he (Borasky) came into England, he (the Count) was very much troubled, by reason of the stormy weather, for fear he

should be cast away ; that he lodged him in his own lodgings the night before the act was perpetrated ; and that Captain Vratz was, the morning before, and immediately after the murder, with the Count. Another thing, gentlemen, I had almost forgot ; the Count was willing to be instructed in the laws of England, and inquired whether a man might lawfully ride out upon a Sunday ? And being told that after the sermon he might, he was very well satisfied ; and the day he inquired of it, was the day that the murder was committed. After the thing was done, Count Konigsmark the next morning pretended he was to go to Windsor, and leaves his lodgings ; but, instead of going to Windsor, (being still in disguise,) he goes to Rotherhithe, by the water side, and there, I think, he continues two or three days, in a black peruke, (and that is disguise enough for such a gentleman,) and afterwards he goes to Gravesend—but I think he was upon the water some time before he thought it convenient to land—and there he was surprised in this disguise ; and when he was surprised and taken, he showed himself to be in great disorder ;

but being charged with the fact, acknowledged nothing of the matter. But how it should come to pass that he should lie so long disguised upon no pretence can be known, and afterwards to pretend that he had business to effect, and then he was to go France, that will lie upon him to answer. But these are the inducing evidences which we give you:—his keeping the Polander in his house ; his disguising of himself ; and his inquiring whether if he killed Mr. Thynne he might not marry my Lady Ogle ; his flight the next day, and pretending to go to Windsor, when he went quite the other way, and all in a disguise ; and these persons not having any appearance or any reason whatsoever for any particular quarrel to Mr. Thynne ; but the Count having some disgust to him, upon terms which the witnesses will tell you of by and by, and being related to (that is, the other prisoners being connected with) the Count, we must leave it to you to judge whether these gentlemen did it singly and purely upon their own heads, or whether they were not set upon it by the Count.”*

* *English Causes Célèbres.*

The judges who presided at this trial were the heads of the three common law courts—Sir Francis Pemberton, Chief-Justice of the King's Bench; Sir Francis North, Chief-Justice of the Common Pleas; and Sir William Montague, Chief-Baron of the Exchequer. It is only requisite here to observe, that Roger North, in his keen sketch of the chief judge, Pemberton, remarks, "that Lord Chief-Justice Pemberton had said to him, (the Lord Keeper North,) that in making laws he had outdone kings, lords, and commons;" and further on is this—"After he was Chief-Justice of the King's Bench, he proved, as I said, a great ruler, and nothing must stand in the way of his authority."

A trial of this kind interested all England, but in no place was it more canvassed than at Whitehall. The death of Thynne had been a great blow to the Duke of Monmouth; for Thynne had vast riches, and nothing makes a man so independent of the cares and miseries of life as a hard heart and a full purse. The King, secretly, was not sorry that Thynne was removed, although he highly disapproved of

the manner of his cutting off. But Charles was a light-hearted monarch, and recovering his grief that any one should dare to do so vile an act in the streets of London, was afterwards much moved in Konigsmark's favour. Indeed, this man seemed gifted with that enviable power of making every person about him his friend ; and the King, to whom the Count had been much recommended, shared in the popular feeling, whilst, on the other hand, the Duke of Monmouth and all the anti-court party were clamorous for his conviction, the circumstantial evidence being as strong as it well could be.

Sir Francis Pemberton had heard how sincerely happy the King would be if the evidence was not sufficiently strong to convict Konigsmark ; and throughout the whole trial the most marked partiality was observable.

It was a matter of some surprise, the manner in which Konigsmark conducted his defence. He challenged a vast number of the jury ; made many legal objections, in which he was generally supported by the Lord Chief-Justice ; and when a French interpreter was proposed, the Lord Chief-Justice remarked, " Tell my

Lord (Count Konigsmark) if he pleases he shall have a French interpreter, for *I* know he speaks that language very well." The Count, however, preferred one who understood High Dutch, and spoke always in that tongue, although he was quite conversant of English.

Konigsmark also desired to have a jury of people "of good account," and begged that he might be protected against any one of Thynne's relations or friends being on the jury. The Count also prayed for a delay of two or three days, when a Mr. Thynne addressed the court, and said, "My Lord, *our* witnesses are all ready, and the counsel instructed and wait here to go on."

The mode of trial in those days resembled much the manner now in use in France, where the prisoners are asked questions, and made either to implicate themselves or throw suspicion upon others.

Nothing could be clearer than the evidence ; and nothing could exceed the devotion of Vratz to his former master. Vratz, on being accused by one witness, was asked by the court, what he had to say to it ? He replied, in a

firm voice, "that it was true he was there, and had that gentleman (Stern) and the Polander along with him as his servants"—Mr. Thynne being a gentleman who always had a great number of servants about him. "That he had received an affront from Mr. Thynne; upon that, he challenged him, and sent letters out of Holland, to desire him to give satisfaction by fighting, but could have no satisfaction, because in England duels are forbid. He thought to make a rencounter of it, and took these gentlemen with him, that, if so be Mr. Thynne's servants should assault him, or knock him on the head, or hinder him from escaping, that they might get him off." Nor would he in any way implicate the Count; for, being asked the nature of his quarrel with Thynne, he replied, "that Mr. Thynne gave out very ill language against the Count, who was his friend, and a man he had many obligations to, and so of himself too; and he would never acquaint Count Konigsmark of it, but would have satisfaction, and take the quarrel on himself, being a gentleman." He said he heard that Thynne called the Count, Hector, and such-like ill

language as was never to be suffered, and that in Germany, when a man would not fight, they shot him."

Vratz underwent a sharp cross-examination, but he resolutely adhered to the above version, in every manner, throwing a cloak of protection over the Count.

This trial was of intense interest. The name and character of Konigsmark were universally known, and many a female eye endeavoured to pierce the dense crowd of human beings, to catch but one glance of him who, however inconstant in love, was brave and generous in war. Neither do women generally regard men with disdain, who have the reputation of strong attachment to their sex, and who also are known to be successful with them.

Men crowded the court, and amongst them, most eager for the conviction of all the culprits, was the Duke of Monmouth, and by his side were two of the cousins of the murdered man, all dressed in deep mourning, and all occasionally urging remarks. And there also was the quick and ready Colonel Brett ; he was anxious for Konigsmark's acquittal, for he this time

would pay largely for the widow's hand. But there was one whose eye was brighter than all the rest ; whose flushed cheek and quivering lip betrayed the intense agitation of her mind ; and by her, was a companion of fairer hue and lighter complexion, who interpreted every word into the Spanish language. These were the wife of the Spanish ambassador, and her friend. The first was Donna Maria, who, shortly after her withdrawal from Barcelona, had made a " well-timed marriage " with a man of high reputation, and before the limit of time had produced her lord a male child. Her breathing was thick and rapid, excepting when the judge made a remark, and then she held her breath, endeavouring herself to catch the words which fell unintelligible on her ear. It was strange that, although those love-lighted eyes were ever fixed upon Konigsmark, never, from the beginning until the close of the trial, had his apparently been dazzled by the lightning which attracted others ; but with the same cool, cautious manner, in which he began his challenge to the jurors, until the moment that his defence was closed, his watchful talent

was devoted to the upholding the words of Vratz, which, whilst they exculpated him, fixed the murder upon the generous servant. Even when his last words were uttered, and when he looked round the court, to endeavour to glean from his judge's countenance the effect of his appeal, his eyes passed those of Donna Maria, and never once were riveted on those which seemed to implore one look of recognition, and which spoke in the glance which conveyed a promise never to desert him.

At that moment, when the court was hushed into repose, and all men leant forward to catch the summing up of the chief judge, the husband of Donna Maria warned her of the time, and urged her to leave the court; but she never heeded the summons, and, as if she knew him who addressed her, she replied, in a hurried tone, "Via usted con Dios!" and leant further forward to catch each sound, whilst her eyes were riveted on Konigsmark.

The Chief-Justice Pemberton proceeded thus: "Look you, gentlemen of the jury—the counsel for the king have been very large in the re-

peating of the evidence, therefore you must not expect from me that I should go over it again." He then proceeded to state the law concerning the culpability of those who are present at a murder. "But for my Lord, the Count Konigsmark, the question will be, as to him, whether he commanded, or gave any authority, or directed to have the murder committed; that is the thing which is now charged upon him, and without that, he cannot be accessory in this case." Pemberton then continued his summing up, apparently impartially, but artful to all cunning in these matters. The evidence against the Count he put timidly forth, but without comment, whilst Konigsmark's explanations, and Vratz's confession that he knew nothing about the murder, were dexterously managed; and in this no mention was made of the purchase of the sword, and the hundred damning proofs which had been given against him. But Vratz's assertion was thus dwelt upon—"I must tell you another thing for law, gentlemen, which was urged by the counsel for the King. Captain Vratz does say, that he, knowing of an affront that had been given to the Count, and having received

an affront himself, did, without the Count's knowledge, do this murder for revenge upon Mr. Thynne. It has been said by the counsel, it will be all one, whether it were with the knowledge of the Count or not. Now, I must tell you, gentlemen, the law is not so, for if a gentleman has an affront given him, which he does seem to resent, if any of his servants officiously, without acquainting him with it, out of too much zeal and too forward a respect to their master's honour, will go and pistol and kill him that they apprehend has affronted their master, he not knowing of it, it will not charge their master with any guilt at all. The law, gentlemen, is not so, as it was urged; for if it were without the Count's knowledge and direction, if a zealous captain has gone and over-shot himself, out of respect to his master's honour, when really it was a dishonour to himself, and all that were acquainted with it, this cannot lie upon him to make Count Konigsmark guilty; but it lies upon me to direct you, for otherwise you might swallow it as a maxim to be all one in law, which it is not."

The jury retired for half an hour, and on their entrance, the slightest noise that a fly's

wing could have occasioned, might have been audible in the awful silence which ensued. The clerk of the court, habituated to scenes of this kind, and with as little feeling as surgeons have during an amputation, broke with his hoarse rough voice the dead silence of the court.

"Gentlemen, are you all agreed of your verdict?"

"Yes."

"Who shall say for you?"

"Foreman."

"George Borasky, hold up thy hand," (which he did.) "Look upon the prisoner. How say you? Is he guilty of the felony and murder whereof he stands indicted?"

"Guilty."

"What goods and chattels, lands and tenements?"

"None, to our knowledge."

The same questions and answers, without the slightest variation, were put and answered in regard to Vratz and Stern. These were of the vulgar herd, and none cared much for any but Vratz, who so nobly had sacrificed him-

self, for, had he declared himself the hired servant of the Count, and that he did the deed expressly by the Count's orders, it might have given a legal loophole of escape.

"Charles John Konigsmark, hold up thy hand. How say you? Is he guilty of the felony whereof he stands indicted, as accessory before, or not guilty?"

"Not guilty."

"God bless the King and the honourable bench!" said Konigsmark, in a slow and measured tone; but such a shriek was heard, that even the bustle of an excited court hushed itself instantaneously, and the loud call for the attendants of the Spanish ambassador, and the eagerness displayed to remove a beautiful dark-eyed woman, who had fallen into violent hysterics, announced who was the generous female that thus rejoiced at a murderer's escape.

Konigsmark, without noticing Vratz, was liberated, and he walked from the bar.

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COUNT KÖNIGSMARK:

An Historical Romance.

BY

CAPTAIN CHAMIER, R.N.

AUTHOR OF

"THE LIFE OF A SAILOR," "BEN BRACE," "JACK ADAMS,"

ETC. ETC.

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COUNT KÖNIGSMARK.

CHAPTER I.

THE sentence, as far as regarded the principals, gave great satisfaction ; but in reference to the accessory, there could but be one opinion, —that of considerable partiality. The Monmouth party clung to the hope that the confession of the convicts, during the short interval allowed between the trial and the execution, might still strongly implicate Königsmark, and leave him, although acquitted, under the ban of suspicion. Borasky being tied up by the executioner, as was then the custom when sentence of death was to be pronounced, said, “ he prayed God to have mercy upon him !”

Vratz, with unflinching nerve, only remarked, that "he heard he was condemned, but that he was never rightly examined or fairly tried." And Stern remarked, "that he did it for the Captain's sake, and went as a second to him." The judge's address had no reference to Konigsmark, and sentence of death was passed in the usual manner, and on the 10th of March they were executed.

Very strenuously had Dr. Horneck and Dr. Burnett endeavoured, by all the terrors of religion, to extract from Vratz anything that could implicate the Count ; and when Stern made a confession, and declared that he had a letter from Konigsmark, asking him to murder Mr. Thynne, Vratz coolly interposed, and told the reverend divines, that theirs was a curious religion which did not believe in auricular confession, and yet wished to force words of untruth, to suit their own purposes, from the men who feared to die. "As for myself," he continued, "I don't value dying of a rush, and I feel convinced God will deal with me *like a gentleman.*"

Great excitement was in London on the 10th of March. "Gibbets," says the *Domestic Intel-*

ligence newspaper of the 9th, “ are prepared on the spot where the murder was committed, and many hundred standings taken up by persons of quality and others.”

Borasky, being of the commonest herd, and being besides very ungainly in his person and manners, was singled from the other two, to be hung in chains ; and after the execution, the body was fixed up at the eastern extremity of the metropolis, on the wayside between Mile-end and Bow. Stern suddenly turned from an assassin into a saint and enthusiast, breathing nothing but heavenly raptures, and he left behind him twenty-five paragraphs or sections of mixed warning and denouncement,* for the benefit of the world, if the world ever consented to notice them. They would have died—indeed, were dead—but the elegant and persevering author of the *English Causes Célèbres* has resuscitated them.

Vratz was a person who occupied much of the public curiosity—his cool, unflinching character had been widely spread, and many, who had seen his unwavering countenance when the sentence of death was passed, were anxious

* *English Causes Célèbres.*

to witness his execution, to see, in that trying hour, if fear could not blanch his cheek, or shake the firmness of his step—but, strange as it was, Vratz was the only unconcerned person in the affair.

Before his tormenters, as he called the divines who endeavoured to obtain a confession, had quite exhausted their eloquence in divinity and their lawyer-like power of cross-examination, Vratz requested, if quite convenient to the Count, that he would honour him with a visit. Konigsmark, who affected the greatest effrontery, and whose abode was publicly known, instantly obeyed the summons. .

On entering the condemned cell, the heart of the Count seemed to increase its rapid beating; he had never contemplated his old servant chained in a dark, low, miserable hole, tasting in life more than half the horrors of death; but his eyes quickly comprehended Vratz's signal to keep a guarded silence. At this interview the gaoler was present, as was a Swedish interpreter, dressed as an assistant, in order, if possible, to glean sufficient to fix the crime on the Count. Vratz asked that these men might retire; but the two clergymen, who

were unceasing in their attendance on the condemned men, said that was impossible.

"At any rate," said Vratz, carelessly, "I can dispense with your holy presence, good gentlemen ; my soul you may fancy in your keeping, but my worldly secrets are in my own. I would have you retire, reverend clergymen, you must needs be fatigued with your long and fruitless attendance."

Being now only in the company of the gaoler and his attendant, Vratz was still on his guard, and began, in a solemn tone of voice, to implore the Count's forgiveness for having acted in this murder without the Count's knowledge, and to assure him that he did it in revenge for the abuse Thynne had lavished upon him. "You hear this?" said Vratz, suddenly, to the gaoler's assistant, who, off his guard, replied, in Swedish, "I do."

"The world for me, good Count, is nearly over," said Vratz ; "and, young as I am, I have seen much of it, and were it not that my execution will deprive you of a faithful follower, and her, the only being I ever loved, of a true and faithful heart, I could see the curtain drop, and the performance finish without

a sigh. See what miserable creatures we are ! Why, at this nearly my last hour, they place a spy upon my words—that poor fellow, who is paid for his treachery, is half a Swede—and thus, what I would have buried here, must needs go forth to the world. Firstly, have I your pardon for having done this deed ?”

Konigsmark, afraid to answer, took Vratz by the hand, and gave him a pressure of acknowledgment for his devotedness.

“It is well,” said Vratz ; “in that hand, my noble master, I understand my forgiveness. Now, I ask you, if, in the course of my long service upon you, I have ever done that which was according to your desire, saving in this last act—if, when attacked, I placed my body before yours to receive the wound—if, in all trials and in dangers, I have done my duty ? Will you grant me one favour ?”

Konigsmark answered, “that at the peril of his life, which now he hardly valued, since an attempt had been made upon his character, he would fulfil, to the uttermost letter, the wishes of his faithful and valued friend.”

“It is here,” said Vratz, taking from his bosom a long lock of hair, which, when he

restored Isabella to liberty, she had granted him. "Tell her, that in life this lock never deserted me; that I wore it while my heart was warm, and that she will receive it when that heart has ceased to beat; but tell her, that when the crowd, eager for the excitement of an execution, may hoot me on the scaffold, my thoughts will be of her, my memory the record of her beauty. I was in hopes to have risen in the French service in the wars, and to have become worthy of her hand; but I know one of her high blood—for she was no peasant girl—could only be won by the brave and the generous. I place her under your care, Count, and my curses, ay, the curses of a dying man, await upon him who dares to violate her honour, or cause the tear of repentance and sorrow to sully her beautiful face. You tremble, Count!"

"It is the chill of this lonely place, and the knowledge of the hardship of your condemnation."

"Think not of me—death cannot unman me. I have too often faced him to fear him. I knew that one day or another he must triumph, and what signifies it if it be to-day or to-

morrow, or ten years hence? We are mere worms, trod and trampled on, and death spares neither the king nor the peasant. But, once again, let me speak of the only object of my heart. When I was at Naples, I learnt much from that devil to whom I was desired to speak ; he was one of the banditti who stole a girl about that time, and in his joyous minutes he mentioned the scene that girl related at Malta. Protect her, Count, and if a dying man's prayer be registered in heaven, your name shall be there ; but curses, ten thousand curses, and the death the least suspected and most sudden, fall upon him who violates her chastity, or degrades her mind ; and if my soul can hover over the wretch who dares to do so great a sin, his sleep shall never be sound ! Ah ! by this interruption I know your time is expired—these lips will soon be sealed in death ;” and approaching close to Konigsmark's ear, he murmured, “ and no power on earth—no, not even the stirring devil of revenge, if revenge I could wish against my kindest master, shall ever betray our secret. You see, gentlemen,” he said, to the sheriff, who came in, “ that I can make my life shorter,

by quickening the passage of each moment in the excitement of my subject. It was but a short quarter of an hour after all. Farewell, good Count, I shall never see you again, unless to-morrow you witness my death ; remember what I have said—to you I entrust her. The ruffians who asked if I had goods and chattels, lands and tenements, would have seized them on my conviction, and would have left me nothing but the words of affection which to the last I reserve for her, and my curses of vengeance after death upon her destroyer. Once more, Count, let me feel your hand—by my soul, it is more cold and clammy than the convicted felon's ! Give this kiss to her, and tell her, in the last moment of my life, I thought of her as her protector, and could have stabbed the man who dared to injure her. Again—again, farewell ! if in this life I have been of service to you, remember me kindly, and guard and protect her. This is my last request. Good bye !”

Konigsmark, having somewhat recovered himself, was about to speak, when Vratz placed his finger on the Count's lip, and said, “ Good master, you are too agitated to talk. Every

word would be weighed by these prison spies, and holy seekers of confessions." Vratz beckoned him away, and Konigsmark left the cell.

"I crave your pardon, good Mr. Sheriff," said Vratz, with wonderful self-possession, "if, in taking leave of my late master, I may have omitted to notice you."

"In the same mood as ever, Captain, I perceive," said the Sheriff. "I did not come to interrupt your last moments with one you have so faithfully served; but that I was sent by a woman, whose face I have never seen, and who bears an order for immediate admission from the secretary of state."

"What!" replied Vratz, "do they wish to show the lion in his cage? Is a convicted murderer so fascinating that women come to look upon him? I am ready, Mr. Sheriff,—because I cannot avert it. There is but one woman I would see, and she is far—far away."

The Sheriff retired, and in a few minutes returned, leading in a figure in deep mourning, with a thick black veil. To her the Sheriff bowed lowly, and added, "A quarter of an hour is the usual time, but I am desired to ex-

tend it at your discretion." He then beckoned to the two gaolers, and, leaving a small hand-bell, remarked, "The door will be fastened; but when you are anxious to be released, sound this, and the door will be instantly opened." The heavy bolts were heard to move, and Vratz and the lady remained alone. For a minute or two neither spoke; but Vratz soon broke silence. "Fair creature," he began, "who can thus compassionate the unfortunate, and who, with all charity of purpose, dares to visit a murderer, in what manner can I be useful to you?—for I see you have something to ask, and your sex never applied either to Konigsmark or Vratz in vain." A slight shudder was visible in the female. "Fear not," said Vratz, "the man who is to die to-morrow will scarcely insult one of your sex to-day. Let me remove that veil, for I am one who never liked a mask."

The veil was removed, and, in all the loveliness of youth and beauty, the elegant Donna Maria was visible.

"By my faith," said Vratz, "I would not have you for my confessor for all France,—no one could keep his own secret, and be wise. I

would have you be brief, good lady. The sand of life is running fast through my glass, and nobody will turn it to-morrow."

"You know the Count Konigsmark?" said Donna Maria.

"I do, and have done for years;—from the time he went mad upon witches until this moment."

"Have you ever left him during that time?"

"Yes! he was forced to fly from Malta, to protect a beautiful creature from insult, and from being compelled into a marriage adverse to her wishes. He left her at Messina whilst he travelled on into Spain."

"Can you describe her?"

"As faithfully as ever limner drew the features of the maid he most adored. She was thus." And Vratz described Isabella.

"'Tis so!" said Donna Maria, in a fluttering voice; "it is the same. Can you tell me,—and not feel angry at my impertinence, for weaning you from graver thoughts to satisfy a woman's curiosity,—where is she now?"

"First, fair lady, let me tell you that the subject is far more agreeable to me than the talk of those parsons, who are always repeating

what I know well enough—a prayer, and the comfortable information that I am to be hanged to-morrow. The lady in question is now at Naples; and a purer, lovelier, more chaste, and more innocent woman breathes not this life.”

“Then we speak not of the same woman,” said Donna Maria.

“How?” said Vratz, much excited.

“Because the one to whom I advert lived with him in Spain,—sometimes dressed as a boy, oftentimes in the dress more befitting a woman.”

“In Spain!” said Vratz, drawing his breath quickly; “then, where is she now?”

“At Naples. She was embarked at Barcelona, and left by the Count suddenly.”

“Did you ever see her?”

“Often—often—too often!”

“In her speech did she slightly lisp?”

“She did.”

“And her hair and eyes?”

“Black as my own.”

“And her country?”

“Italian.”

“Now, sound that bell,” said Vratz, “and

let me hasten my execution, for from this moment no secret is safe within my lips ; and I would not die like a cur, snapping where I could not bite. Did she sing ?”

“ Sweetly—sweetly ! some songs which she had learnt in Greece, when she was detained after shipwreck.”

“ Enough, for the love of Heaven !” said Vratz, as he approached his visitor. “ Say not another word—you have done more than the executioner could do,—you have killed my heart. Ah ! this is fearful vengeance of my crime to hear of this. Oh, that I had died this morning, and never clasped the cold clamminess of his hand, or felt the kiss of his hot lips ! I have a favour to ask you.—Is it within your power to give me some strong medicine which would make me sleep until to-morrow. I do not want to poison myself,—that is a coward’s act, but I would cease from this instant to have memory.”

“ Alas ! I cannot assist you, poor soul ; and much I grieve that my visit here should so have disturbed your last minutes. I wished only to discover if Isabella——”

“ Her name, by all that is holy and wonder-

ful! Then may curses, which he has heard, light upon him,—for this did he suddenly embark and leave me to follow to Naples! What! not one soul left in this world to regret Isabella, his companion? Ah! well I know his disposition,—and I, deceived, cajoled, to forward his views that he might become rich and great! I thought I heard a footstep near the door. Be not frightened at my impetuosity,—dying men have the privilege of being eccentric. What can I answer you in order to be left alone, and thank God that I have no one to regret?”

“My cause for coming thus to you was to ascertain if she was living with him now.”

“That I can answer positively, for had she been, he had died before Mr. Thynne was murdered. A gleam of hope still comes to my despairing eyes!—did she—did *she* love *him*?”

“Ay, more than herself,—for when the Count must have met his death from a bull, she rushed in and plunged her dagger to its heart.”

Vratz sat down. That last blow had overcome the giant of courage. He moved his heavy chains about, his eyes were fixed upon the

floor, nor did the warning bell arouse him. Donna Maria thanked one who never heeded the words, and, drawing her thick veil over her face, left the prison.

The manner of Vratz being so different from his former mood, some apprehension of poison occurred to the gaolers. They held their lights close to him,—they raised his head,—he never spoke; but with a vacant stare allowed them to move him as they chose. The clergymen came, for it was now growing late, but they prated to the pavement,—even the food remained untouched; and not a person, whose business it is to perplex and annoy the criminal, could gain from him one answer. He threw himself upon the miserable bed, and, holding his hands close over his eyes, never moved.

At that bedside knelt two holy and devout men, who, sincere in their prayer, implored forgiveness for him who cared not to implore it himself. By turns they read passages in the holy book, and again and again implored the murderer to join in their prayers:—it was all in vain. At eleven o'clock they retired, and Vratz and his gaolers were alone.

"At what time am I to be hung to-morrow?" said Vratz, with his usual coolness.

"About eleven, young man, you will be turned off."

"And how and where is this last scene to be?"

"On the spot where the crime was committed. You will be taken there in a cart, and will find plenty of company."

"If I wished to speak to one from the scaffold should I be allowed?"

"Lord love you, yes! They never minds what people say who are going to be hanged; but if it's a wet morning you can't expect 'em to be very attentive. It's not at all painful, if Jack Ketch places the rope right, and you keep your neck steady."

"Thank you," said Vratz, "for the information; and now, having conquered myself, I will allow nature to conquer me, and go to sleep. Good night!"

"Good night," said the gaoler, leaning back; "those gentlemen will come early to give you consolation."

"Good night—good night!" And marvellous it was that in about five minutes the criminal

was fast asleep. He slept soundly, as those in good health ; and it was late on the following morning before he awoke. He begged he might be carefully shaved, and was more particular in his dress than usual. About nine o'clock the Sheriff informed him his hour was come.

" I would," said Vratz, " it had been earlier. May I write one last word ?"

" It will but delay you a moment," replied the Sheriff, who appeared to think this was but an attempt to prolong a miserable existence, and grasp at another short minute of life. Vratz read his thoughts, and smiled :—" You are mistaken, I seek not to prolong life,—but I would have these words my last. I therefore wish to write them, to hand them to you, or the executioner, before, as my companion said last night, I am ' turned off.'"

The paper was brought, and Vratz hastily, but in a firm hand, wrote two lines. He sealed them carefully, and turning round, said, " I am ready ; but I have one request which, perhaps, you, sir, will grant me."

" If in my power to accede to it, you need not fear a refusal."

" It is not so difficult ; only this,—that a

second before I am executed, you take this paper from my hand, and give it yourself to the Count Konigsmark."

"I will pledge my honour," said the Sheriff, "to the obedience of your wish."

"Then I need not say, as your monarch said to the bishop, *Remember?*"

"My honour is pledged, Captain, and I shall remember *that*."

CHAPTER II.

THE morning happened to be fine, and Vratz carelessly remarked, as his hands were pinioned, and as he walked towards the cart, "that he should have a large company." The sight of his coffin and the executioner did not in the least alter his countenance, and he sat down upon that which was shortly to contain his inanimate body, with all the indifference possible.

The crowd saluted him with one tremendous hiss of execration, at which he smiled; but that soon subsided when the multitude witnessed the undaunted manner in which he was prepared to meet his fate; the scorn turned to sympathy, alike indifferent to the convict.

The clergyman read diligently the dreadful

denunciation on impenitent sinners. Even the executioner knelt, but Vratz sat quietly on the coffin, his eyes seeming to penetrate the crowd in search of some one man. He held the small letter tightly in his hand, and it was evident that his mind was far away from the scene. The jolting of the cart seemed to require some exertion on the criminal's part, and this alone seemed to remind him that he was in an uneasy carriage.

The streets were lined with people, all anxious to see a man hanged; and strange it is, that the frequency of executions never gratified this morbid feeling of curiosity; but human nature is the same everywhere. The infliction of the highest penalty of the law is an attractive tragedy; and the front windows and raised platforms are better speculations than boxes for an opera, even when majesty appears.

Men have been known to go miles to fetch a bottle of water from a stagnant pond, because a woman had been drowned in it; and a knife which has inflicted murder is retained as a wonderful curiosity. The pickpockets are the only people indifferent to the scene. But with the old and young, the peer and the

peasant, the rich and the poor, an execution commands a vast congregation ; what was intended to thrill the mind with horror, has lost its effect. No one looks at the priests in their holy avocation, or joins in their prayers. The executioner is a much stronger object of admiration to those who are likely to be acquainted with him personally before long ; and every twitch of the condemned man's countenance, every motion of his body, and every wink of his eye, is watched with the intensity of curiosity and alarm, that a child fascinated by a rattlesnake might be supposed to bestow on its probable destroyer. Strange, most strange indeed, in a highly civilized nation, are the delight experienced, the excitement gratified, at the unnatural death of a fellow creature. The crime for which he suffers makes the flesh creep, and blanches the cheek of beauty. The sight of an equally hideous death is anticipated as a scene of recreation ; and people stand for hours, in all the inclemency of the season, not to lose so fascinating and so exciting a spectacle.

Had the government ordered a dozen live tigers and panthers to be harnessed to the

king's carriage, provided they were not to be allowed to eat the king afterwards, not a twentieth part of the people would have been drawn to the curious scene, who honoured Vratz with their attendance at his execution. The only calm man, the only one who did not seem animated by hope, or depressed by fear, was Vratz ; and so great was his unconcern, that it is mentioned thus :—" The Captain," said Sir John Reresby, " died without any the least symptoms of fear, or offering at the least glance of reflection on Count Konigsmark ; and, seeing me in my coach, as he passed by in the cart, he made a bow to me with the most steady countenance, as he did to several of the spectators before he was turned off. In short, his whole carriage, from the first moment he was apprehended to the last that he resigned his breath, savoured much of gallantry, but not at all of religion."

Borasky and Stern occupied very little of the public attention ; they were truly penitent and meek. Morbid sensibility requires something more stimulating than propriety, hence every word of Vratz's was retained. Stern and Borasky were eager to read to the last,

Dilheren's "Way to Happiness," in High Dutch, and sung together three times the 51st Psalm.

Doctor Horneck, having prepared the minds of the two others for the dreadful scene, now turned his attention to Vratz ; but finding him quite unconcerned,* "hinted, though gently enough, a reference to hell fire."—"I fear no hell," was the short reply.

"I answered," continued the Doctor, "possibly he might believe none, or if he did, it might be a very easy one of his own making."

He answered, "he was not such a fool as to believe that souls could fry in material fire, or be roasted as meat on a great hearth, or in a kitchen."

The cart at last drew up under the gibbets, and a loud roar of human monsters again assailed, in execrations fierce and deep, the last moments of these men. Borasky and Stern both shuddered at their approaching end ; but Vratz fixed his eyes on the Duke of Monmouth, after having in vain sought for Count Konigsmark. The assembly was so enormous that nothing but a pre-eminence of situation, like that occu-

* *Causes Célèbres.*

pied by the Duke, could direct the eye to any one object ; it was a multitudinous sea of heads, moved backwards and forwards according to the variations of the pressure, and all with their eyes fixed on only one of the criminals. Thus does Dr. Burnet describe Vratz's last minutes : " This singular desperado, in truth, completely puzzled and nonplussed the two worthy divines. It is certain, that never man died with more resolution, and less signs of fear, or the least disorder. His carriage in the cart, both as he was led along, and at the place of execution, was astonishing ; he was not only undaunted, but looked cheerful, and smiled often. When the rope was put about his neck, he did not change colour or tremble, his legs were firm under him. He looked often about on those that stood in balconies and windows, and seemed to fix his eyes on some persons. Three or four times he smiled. He would not cover his face as the rest did ; but continued in that state, often looking up to heaven with a cheerful countenance, and a little motion of the hands."

This worthy chronicler of last actions never noticed the stream of tears which coursed down

the cheeks of the two penitent men, and dropped like rain from beneath the cap which had shut out the world and its sorrows from them for ever. The Sheriff advanced, and Vratz, who that moment had caught a glimpse of him for whom he had sacrificed "state, station, heaven, mankind, his own esteem," gave the note, and with his eyes directed the look of the Sheriff, and said, "*There !*"

The preliminaries were all over. The cart was driven away, and three of our principal characters were at once removed from the scene. And yet, after death, Vratz was destined to be the means of handing another man's name down to posterity—and in this quotation is proved what good society *honoured* his execution.

"I went," says Evelyn, "to see the corpse of Vratz. The King permitted that his body should be transported to his own country; it being the first which was embalmed by a particular art, invented by one William Russell, a coffin-maker, which preserved the body without disbowelling, or, to appearance, using any bituminous matter. The flesh was florid, soft, and full, as if the person were only sleep-

ing. He had now been dead fifteen days, and lay exposed in a very rich coffin lined with lead, too magnificent for so daring and horrid a murderer." Thus it happened, that the name of the inventor of this art was preserved from the curiosity of Evelyn, who, like the rest of society, flocked to see a murderer lying in state. Borasky, as has been mentioned, was exhibited at another place ; but as to Stern, by far the most penitent and best behaved of the whole, no mention is made of him after the last exhibition.

It was with feelings of intense interest that Konigsmark watched the execution, and cursed each moment's delay. He knew that few men, like to die with a foul falsehood on their lips to the very last ; and well he knew, from the interest taken by the Monmouth party, both at the trial and execution, that they would try to extract some words which might more directly implicate him, or fix a fouler stain upon his character. He saw Vratz direct the Sheriff's eyes, and he slunk behind a lovely female, who witnessed this horrid scene from her balcony.

It is the fashion to wonder how Roman women could attend a gladiatorial exhibition,

and, by reversing the thumb, decree a murder. There still was something exciting in the desperate effort of each gladiator. There was the "din, the glorious clang of arms," to rouse the spirit, and to silence the feelings; but in so vulgar and coarse a sight as gibbeting a murderer, there can be found no excuse for those of the softer sex, who go to gloat over the last struggles of a desperate and despicable criminal.

CHAPTER III.

"Come in, fair lady ; heed not the exterior of the house, or the idle vermin who frequent it ; you will be well received by José Vergani and his wife, and never want a protector whilst Felipo Benvenuto lives."

"I thank you much," replied Isabella. "I am weary with my voyage, and would repose myself for a time."

"This is the lady, José," said Benvenuto, as he presented his beautiful charge.

"And, by my faith," replied Vergani, eyeing her with his penetrating glance, "one much favoured in appearance. Pass this way, fair lady ; my wife will make you as comfortable as our circumstances permit."

The wife of Vergani was a woman forty

years of age. In Italy, time leaves powerful marks after thirty, but even at this advanced stage had not effaced the traces of a beauty once the pride and the ornament of Naples. Laura, in her youth, had been admired by many—stilettoes had drawn blood and caused death on her account—and she remembered those proud years with all the fondness with which women cling to the last declining charm. Even now, when grown robust and out of all symmetry—when the slender waist and swelling form which marked the ripening girl were no longer imaginable—Laura coquetted with her glass, and ever found favour in her own sight. The appearance of Isabella awakened all the recollections of the past, and she eyed her with envy.

“Be seated, poor creature!” she began. “Vergani has told me you have come across the sea from Spain; and although, when recovered, you may look somewhat better, yet now you look very haggard and somewhat indisposed.”

Isabella, like a true woman, felt annoyed. It was the first time (so constant is flattery to a pretty woman’s ear) that she had ever been

told she could look ill. "I am, indeed, much fatigued," she replied: and Laura, during that short answer, had seen the wonderful whiteness of her teeth.

"Some cordial will restore you, my dear," said Laura; "and Vergani will not make a long account for one so kindly introduced to him."

"I was in hopes, madam," replied Isabella, who had early conceived a deep disgust for her hostess, "that I could have found some small apartment to which I might have retired, and thus saved you the trouble and inconvenience of sheltering me. I fear I may incommode you much."

"There is a sofa in that room," said Laura, without noticing Isabella's speech; "you can rest there, and I will speak to José concerning you."

It was impossible for a woman who had roamed to distant countries with a man like Konigsmark, in all the splendour of affluence, not to feel depressed in spirits, as she looked round the room to which she had been invited. There was a bed, but such a one as no lady would court. Around the room, hung with-

out any regard to neatness, were various kinds of arms. On one side was a long fowling-piece swinging to a rusty nail, suspended by a leathern belt which fitted Vergani's shoulders; near it dangled a pair of most uncourteous pistols, sustained by the guard of the triggers; near these a smaller one was visible, whilst a thirsty stiletto, rusted in most unseemly neglect, was nailed by the side of a rapier; the former had a bright and sharp point, as if *that* had not been neglected, and the sword was so new, and of so good a manufacture, that it looked a foreigner amongst the dirty natives. In one corner were four or five telescopes, varying in power, and near them was a lamp of good size, with a red glass: it had for its companion two or three flags, rolled up on sticks; and this motley group of articles was surmounted by a strange kind of invention for letting off false fires, whilst some fireworks, called blue lights, stood in rows on a small shelf beneath. These were all useful at times to carry on Vergani's occupation. Here and there, one or two rather coarse prints were pinned against the wall; and a crucifix, which was placed between two of the most objectionable, proved that supersti-

tion still held some sway over the desperate heart of the possessor. The rickety sofa creaked with the unusual weight; but scarcely had Isabella reclined on the pillow, over which—not for fear of injuring it—she had spread a handkerchief, than Laura appeared with a small flask covered with straw, a glass, and some cool inviting water.

“There, my dear,” she said, with her most winning and her falsest smile; “in this warm weather you will find these refreshing. This is a small innocent wine—sweet—such as ladies love, and this is iced. Now go to sleep for an hour or so, and I will come when you awake.”

Isabella had noticed the change of countenance in Laura, and, with a fearful presentiment that her look boded her no good, she resolved, as soon as she was recovered from her fatigue, either to throw herself upon the honour or protection of Benvenuto, or seek an asylum elsewhere, and trust to Providence. Her future was not very bright in appearance; and, as she dreamily fancied the road on which she should pursue her course, thousands of fancies, as strange as they were unreal, flitted across her drowsy brain, until she fell asleep. The heaving

of her bosom proclaimed how dead she was to all around her.

Laura, whose step was light, having ascertained that she was in a heavy slumber, carefully closed the outer door, bolting it from the outside, and, entering a small room, reported to Benvenuto and Vergani that she was safe, and out of hearing.

"What signifies," said Vergani, who seemed much excited, "how we make the money, so long as we do make it?"

"It signifies much to me," replied the other. "I am a sailor, a man of few words, and my word is my bond. I pledged my honour."

"Oh! by my faith, that is exceeding rich!" interrupted Vergani. "The honour of the Captain of a coasting schooner!"

"A regular trader, by your leave," said Benvenuto, quickly; "coasters don't make straight courses from Barcelona to Naples."

"Well, coasters or traders, as you like, most honourable Captain. Pray, may I ask if your honour prevents your landing at José Vergani's sundry contraband articles? Pooh! pooh! man; we are not going to beat round the bush to overreach one another. Here's

the question:—The girl *was* under your charge, and *is* now under mine ; we have agreed as to the profits, and now comes the point—how to realize them. If I thought I could persuade the Count Meraviglia that this was his child, we might make a good thing of it hereafter,—for it would never do to hand her over to him like a bale of tobacco just arrived and just sold. But what do you think, Felipo, if we were to show her guardedly to the Prince Durazzo, or one or two of the Dorias, whose eyes would glisten at such a prize—eh ?”

“ I would not think of such a thing for a second,” replied the sailor. “ The girl shall come to no harm, if I can save her.”

“ That would puzzle you to hinder, if I were resolved. Here she is: at a whistle how many men could I muster, and how many corners would you turn towards the police, without encountering this ?”—and he gently drew from the red shawl worn round his waist a bright and sparkling stiletto. “ She is beautiful, and she may be a prize. Laura will soon manage to keep her quiet. Did she taste the wine ?”

“ Not a drop.”

“ Nor the water ?”

"Not a drop."

"Well, well," continued Vergani, "when she awakes she will take one or the other, and will sleep soundly enough not to look after apartments."

"This is not dealing like a man, Vergani. If the poor creature is uncomfortable here, let me find her another lodging."

"You should have thought of that before you brought her to this cage. Here, I promise the pretty prisoner is safe. What eyes she has! and what a beautiful mouth!—every feature is as accurate as a statue!—and, for figure, she reminds me of what Laura was a quarter of a century ago—eh, Laura?"

"I think little of your civility for that speech," said Laura, colouring deeply.

"Don't be jealous, old lady."

"Old lady, forsooth! This is the old story, José; you love that creature, and you think to retain her by force; but I'll be a match for you."

"You have had one trip into Calabria, my dear,—do you want another? Let me find you daring to cross my wishes, and three days afterwards you would never find your way out

of the wood, even if you got out of the cave. Go; there is some one come in.—It will be some time yet, Felipo, before José Vergani can startle at the words of man or woman. Those who follow my trade can always revenge—may love—and can hate intensely. Take another glass; this wont set you to sleep, or, if it does, we can sleep together. They tell us in eastern countries that the cook tastes each dish in the presence of his sovereign, to assure him against poison. Now look at me.” And he drained a full glass.

“Good,” said the Captain; “I shall not be behind in that trade.” And he emptied his. “I see,” continued Benvenuto, “that I have let the staff out of my hand, and now must trust to your honour.”

“The government do that often, I can assure you,” replied Vergani, whose quick eyes seemed reading every thought of his open-hearted companion.

“Promise me you will make inquiries concerning the Count.”

“On my honour,” said Vergani, placing his hand on his heart, and giving a peculiar expression to his words.

"And our agreement stands good?"

"Of course it does. And now to other matters. Do you land the things for me to-night?"

"Yes,—at eleven. We have our favourite for the guard. I have spoken to him."

"Then that is safe."

Laura entered and whispered in Vergani's ear.

"What's the use of such caution before Benvenuto? Tell him he shall have it to-morrow—or, stop, tell him I will talk to him directly. Excuse me, good Benvenuto. Laura, sit down with our old friend—I dare say he can show you how the Spanish girls dance the fandango."

Upon quitting the room, Vergani hastened up stairs. Laura had mentioned that Isabella had awoke, and was trying the door.

"So—so, fair lady," said Vergani, as he entered; "my wife bolted this door for fear some one might intrude upon your slumbers."

"The bolt *outside* would not have hindered that. Is the Captain near at hand? I would speak to him."

"I wish you could, fair lady; but it would be difficult at present. They have found some

smuggled goods on board his vessel, and he is now taken to prison. I have sent some one to watch, and will release him before to-morrow night. I told my wife to bring you some sweet wine and water—have you tasted them ?”

“No. I am much too anxious to drink.”

“And I much too anxious to hear your history. You know how it is in my power to serve you, and how requisite it is that all should be a profound secret between us. You must entrust me with all confidence as to your life.”

“Indeed, I shall not be quite so communicative. I was told you knew my father, and could restore me to him.”

“You were rightly informed, in one respect—that is, that I know a great many fathers who have lost their children, and I occasionally find them, or some others to represent them ; but José Vergani would live upon nothing but macaroni, if he did not secure some profit from his exertions.”

“That is but reasonable, and I have means of being generous.”

“How, and where ?” asked Vergani, quickly.

Isabella, remembering the caution of Benvenuto, answered, "that certain letters had been despatched to various merchants, who, upon her presenting herself, would furnish money."

"And you have letters to them?"

"I have the means," replied Isabella, with firmness, "to prove that I am the person. As far as that is concerned, I shall not want your assistance. Have you any apartments for me?"

"The best in Naples, and close at hand; but I must beg you to honour *me* by accepting mine to-night, for yours cannot be occupied until to-morrow afternoon."

This announcement mortified Isabella; for the room in which she had slept was small, warm, and not over free from some of those vermin so common in Italian houses. But still the room had one charm—it overlooked the beautiful bay of Naples; and even Vergani's telescopes might beguile an hour—for there the idle sail flapped against the mast of the becalmed ship—there, also, numerous fishing-boats passed to and fro, and, close underneath, the idle lazzaroni told their tales of love and wonder.

"Then I must rest contented for the night ; but I fear I must incommode you."

"Not the least, good lady. I have my orders to make you as comfortable as possible, and to use all endeavours to promote your interest."

"And, in so doing, be assured your own will not be neglected. Do not let me engage your time from other affairs. I can sit at this window and watch the boats and shipping in the bay—it will amuse me much."

"I am glad to find you so easily reconcile yourself to our poor hospitality. When the day draws to a close, and the sun is below the horizon, I will, with your permission, call upon you. You must be aware that without some clue, such as you yourself can give, I cannot find your parent. I leave this to your consideration. *We* must understand each other, or I must relinquish the affair. At what hour would you dine?"

"When the sun is down and the air cool, I could perhaps eat ; but I am far too much oppressed to think of that now."

Vergani retired, and Isabella drew a deep, deep sigh. What was her situation ? How could she rely upon so low, so cunning, a man

as Vergani. His eye was everywhere, and a sinister look accompanied every glance. Her friend—the only one she now could call a friend—was in prison, and who would protect her against any rudeness of her host? Then, again, his wife—the dislike was evident on her countenance—she did not disguise it; and the bolted door seemed to imply that she was a prisoner.

The intolerable heat prompted her to relieve herself of some of her garments, and the cool-looking water, which cast a glow on the glass, was too inviting to be refused; she drank with a thirst only known in warm climates, when the luxury of the draught compensates for the uneasiness of the parched palate. There was a curious taste, she was certain; but then in different places the water, she knew, acquired different tastes. She took down a small telescope, the use of which she had learned from Konigsmark, and adjusting the focus, beguiled a few minutes in admiring a large ship, which, with all her sails spread, was courting the light air from the westward, in order to gain the anchorage. By degrees she felt again inclined to sleep, and roused herself sufficiently to secure

her door ; then, yielding to the pleasant impulse, she divested herself of her dress, and throwing herself upon the sofa, courted the slumber which had nearly overcome her ; and there, secure in the belief of privacy, reclined in sweet slumbers the fairest form of Italy.

She had not been long asleep before a panel at the further end of the room gently glided back, and Laura, without her shoes, entered. Her first care was to assure herself that Isabella slept—as those always slept who tasted of the iced water or sweet wine of Vergani ; she then withdrew the two bottles, and left others, cautiously withdrawing and closing the panel. Vergani was instantly informed—for Vergani's wife was but a slave—one who dared not for a moment disobey the smallest wish of her husband. She was, as necessity required, either a smuggler, a spy, a watch-dog, a nurse, a servant, or a wife—the last was nominal, but requisite.

Vergani, with a footfall as light as the fall of snow, was soon at the panel, and here his wife interposed, and whispered “ She is undressed. Why should you go in ? There is the proof. She sleeps. I have changed the bottles.”

Vergani but gave one reproachful look, and Laura crouched in a corner like a stealthy tigress. The panel was withdrawn, and he entered. The sight before him was unexpected. Even he never contemplated so lovely a form, so glowingly displayed. He fixed his eyes upon her in wonder and amazement, and, having glutted his sight, he withdrew, closing the secret panel.

"How long has she been asleep?" he said, in a whisper to his wife.

"About ten minutes, at the most."

"Come down with me; I have a note for you to take to some one on the Chiaja. Mind how you deliver it—and be quick. Let me have no loitering by the way.—And have I yet to give you lessons in your duty? How came those impertinent words from your lips?"

Laura's eyes quailed before the piercing glance of Vergani's—yet she could revenge, and fearfully revenge. Her heart was but the lodging-house of good actions, but the permanent residence of all ill ones.

"Go," said Vergani—"see the Prince yourself; and if not within, trace him, as you have often done before, and find him. Should

he be out of Naples, upon some of these foolish parties of pleasure, take this to the Doria ; tell either the one or the other that after two hours from this time the opportunity will be lost."

"So, good Benvenuto, your fair charge sleeps, and will soon recover from the fatigue of her voyage. To-morrow we will set about finding her a father—and," continued Vergani, with a smile, "it is extraordinary how glad men are to recover their lost children."

"And so would you, Vergani, with all your sneer."

"Yes, if I lost my son in Calabria I could not easily replace him ; nor would all our men follow a stranger. I should regret him as one most useful to me ; but, for the affection, we have been too long separated for that. My men will be near you to-night. I have arranged everything, and to-morrow we will settle accounts."

"Good," replied Felipo, who felt somewhat the effect of the wine,—"good—agreed—your hand, only, that no harm shall come to her."

"Harm!" interrupted Vergani ; "how would harming her benefit us?"

"It is possible that it would benefit you," replied Felipo, with a cunning look. "But come, come, we are both honourable men, as far as we ourselves are concerned, we would do no wrong to any. Your hand, Vergani."

"And yours, good Benvenuto. We must live ; and fair play is the best policy."

They parted—the one to arrange a bribe for an officer to betray his trust ; the other to ripen his plan to cheat his friend, and to sell his charge to the highest bidder. They were both most honourable men in their own estimation.

CHAPTER IV.

"THIS will be a good affair," said Vergani to himself, as he rubbed his hands with delight. "The prince and the duke bid high for the prize, and she must be removed out of temptation; for, once clear of my threshold, and I have no power over her. Benvenuto sleeps soundly in gaol—that was a master stroke of mine, having him arrested in the act of smuggling. But now to the lady, who will be little inclined for active measures; she will be drowsy for a week to come."

The manner of Vergani had altered entirely; there was an obsequiousness, a readiness to oblige, a willingness to be of service, which admirably succeeded with the unsuspecting Isabella.

Awakening with an unaccountable lassitude, she felt more disposed to remain quiet than to undergo the exertions of walking. Vergani offered to convey her into her new apartment in a carriage, and, moving her carefully to the window, expressed a wish that the mild balminess of the sea-breeze might restore her to activity. "It is but what most people feel either in Sicily or Naples, when they first arrive. You must have been much fatigued, for you have slept the whole night, and even forgot your dinner. By the Virgin!" said Vergani, making a most orthodox cross, "I could never sleep in my life without a supper."

"I feel but little inclined for breakfast," said Isabella, with a faint smile; "but, since your kind wife has brought me this chocolate and toast—a meal we are much accustomed to in Spain—I must try and appear grateful for her kindness."

"And now, fair lady, do you feel inclined to give me so much of your former life as to afford me a clue to your parentage?"

"All that I can give is said in a sentence. I believe, if I can credit my memory, that I

heard my supposed parents when they fled from Calabria with me"——

"Calabria !" interrupted Vergani.

"Good man," said Isabella, faintly, "if you would hear my account of myself before I fall asleep again, do not interrupt me. It was twelve or thirteen years ago that I was forced from the secluded cottage in which we lived, to accompany Marvelli and his wife."

"Who did you say ? Marvelli !"

"Marvelli ! what new wonder is that ?"

Vergani leaped from his seat, and taking the left hand of Isabella, in an instant bared her arm nearly to the shoulder ; a flush covered his face, and with a glow of satisfaction and delight he exclaimed, "St. Francisco be praised ! he shall have four candles burnt to his honour this evening."

Isabella, although half overcome by the deleterious mixture she had drank the preceding night, resisted this attack upon her modesty, and her fine eyes lit up with a moment's fierce anger. Vergani heeded it not, but applying a small whistle to his mouth, blew one sharp, shrill note ; then taking down a telescope, he, as sailors say, swept the bay. "Ah !" he ex-

claimed, not noticing Isabella—"there she is, and may see the signal;" with that he unrolled the flag, and hung it carelessly from the window.

"Pray take back that vile flag," said Isabella; "it keeps out all the air."

Vergani never heeded a word, but called aloud, "Pedro!"

Pedro answered from below, and was desired to come up. A quick torrent of words fell on his ear in a whisper, and the man disappeared.

Vergani having in an instant formed his resolution, was quick in his measures; his promptness and his genius had saved him, hundreds of times, in danger, and in intrigue no one was his equal; he wore any feature which circumstances required, and could be apparently gay and happy whilst his heart was sad; he was as devoid of feeling as the hardest rock; nothing moved him but money, nothing animated him above his usual level, but the excitement of some daring adventure. It was said in Naples, that he was enormously rich, had lands and houses in Sicily, and that more than one vessel, which daily might be seen in

the bay, apparently fishing, waited there for the arrival of vessels which threw overboard the contraband goods, which the boat conveyed in safety to nooks unknown even to the guarda costas. No one opposed a landing; the soldier was bribed, and the officer participated occasionally in the venture. Vergani fed many; his whistle could surround him with ruffians devoted entirely to him, and few cared to interfere with one who paid highly for his security: still Vergani was an object of apprehension, and the police would gladly have crushed him if they had caught him unprepared; he, too, was watched by one of his own men, who was in the pay of high authorities.

Isabella soon fell into a gentle slumber, and again the wine and water was changed. She cooled her parched lips with the iced water, and this time felt confident a more pungent taste was evident; she ate too with some feeble appetite, and, more aroused than formerly, she begged to see Vergani, in order to endeavour to liberate Benvenuto. Laura could only answer that her husband was away; that she dared not move in any business without him; and that he was a person who never forgave an offence.

"Poor creature!" she added, with a tone of real pity; "you are in his grasp, nor will you easily escape."

"It is rarely a wife speaks so of her husband!"

"It is seldom a wife finds so great a tyrant in a husband."

"We are taught to bear with the trifling humours of men, when we espouse them."

"We cannot forget that we are women." If Isabella's beauty had not excited the envy of Laura, the latter would have felt a sincere interest in befriending her: but she hated her for her youth, and detested her for her beauty.

Isabella expressed a wish to walk and see her new apartments. Laura did not know where they were, and feigned an excuse that the heat was oppressive.

"Beneath the shade of those trees on the chiaja, sheltered from its rays, and fanned by the breeze, I think I should soon recover from this oppression, this desire to sleep.

There was a degree of malice in the words in which Laura replied, "It would be dangerous for one so very beautiful to fall asleep *there*; besides, Vergani will return soon; it is only

three o'clock ; when the cooler breeze of the evening comes, a walk might benefit you."

"Perhaps you are right, madam," replied Isabella, languidly ; "it is strange this beautiful climate should so overpower me."

Whatever might have been Isabella's recollection of one certain Count, it was evident Vergani went not in that direction ; he directed his steps across the promontory in the direction of Pozzuolo, and stopping at a low, miserable hut, he blew his whistle ; he was answered in a moment, and giving a bundle which he carried to the woman who appeared, he desired her to place it in a room up stairs. Vergani was well known to all in this hovel ; they made no remark, but obeyed, whilst he himself, passing through a small garden, walked along the south side of a small bay to a rocky point which projected into the sea. Here for some time he remained, looking towards Naples ; and having consulted the time, he returned moodily to the cottage. Without bestowing a word upon the woman or her daughter, he went to the room, and in a few minutes came down dressed as a signor of distinction ; the habitual slouch of manner was discarded with the gar-

ment, and Vergani looked the character he assumed. On passing the hostess, he remarked, "You know, good woman, how profitable it is neither to see, hear, nor speak ; and putting his finger to his lips to ensure silence, he passed out of the door, taking an almost unfrequented path over the hills, with which he seemed well acquainted.

Vergani's visits of this kind were so frequent, that they passed without a remark, the daughter merely saying, "He looks like a prince as well as a beggar, whichever character he assumes. I wonder what he is plotting now ; he generally used to speak to me, but to-day he said not one word."

"Never heed his words or his deeds, child, excepting when the former are orders, and the latter require concealment ; he is a good friend to us, and to the poor everywhere. Go to your work, child ; remember we have neither tongue, eyes, nor ears ; he will be back soon, for he has left his proper dress up stairs."

Descending the hill on the further side, Vergani came in sight of the splendid domain of the Count de Meraviglia, and he stopped to

gaze on its beauties, a thousand times seen before, but never with so much delight as now. It seemed, with all its beauties, as if wanting the sound of children's voices to enliven it. The woods were filled with the cheerful notes of the birds, but there was a loneliness and apparent barrenness—not a soul was to be seen, the many windows all were closed—not a human creature seemed to exist in a place which to the eye was a paradise.

Vergani surveyed it in a pensive mood ; and then having become satiated with its loneliness, he passed rapidly on, until, coming upon the road, which wound round the hill he had passed over, he arrived at the entrance. A surly dog growled at a distance ; and an old woman, apparently astonished at so much noise, put her head from a small window, and seeing a well-dressed man approaching, she soon exhibited her portly figure from a door.

“ I must see the Count, with your kind permission, madam.”

“ He sees no one, signor,” was the reply. “ For twelve long years, since the useless search he made throughout Italy, he has retired from the world.”

"He sees a priest, does he not?" said Vergani, with an ill-suppressed sneer.

"He does," replied the woman, eyeing Vergani; "but the Signor is not of the church."

"No; nor much of the congregation either. But, church or no church, priest or no priest, I must see the Count; or it will be the worst day's work he ever made since the loss of his child."

"What do you know of that?" asked the woman.

"More than you know, and more than the Count will know," replied Vergani, coolly, "without you gain me admission. Look you, good woman; I cannot waste my time in many words; I must, before the sun has set, return to Naples. Go; apprise the Count of my coming."

"And what name am I to say?"

"I am not at all particular under what name you announce me. As I shall not give you my own, you are welcome to christen me after your favourite saint, or the one in whom the Count has most faith; for myself, I prefer St. Francisco; but when things go wrong, and no notice is taken of my candles, then I light up

St. Christoforo. Call me what you like, but call quickly."

The large dog came to keep guard ; but, to the old woman's surprise, Vergani called it by its name, and the fierce brute licked his hand and wagged his tail. The woman looked astonished.

"He is old now," said Vergani. "This animal must be at least thirteen, and has a good memory: he knows the hand that fed him well."

The old lady piously crossed herself,—looked particularly at the foot of Vergani,—returned to find her master,—taking care to close the door upon the visitor, who remained outside.

"Oh, oh ! Nettuno," said Vergani, playing with the dog, and taking from his pocket a large biscuit which he had purposely brought, "let us renew our acquaintance ; it might be as well to keep your tongue quiet."

The dog was coaxed into kindness, and laid down to be caressed. This was the Count's safeguard!—the terror of the few who ever approached the chateau ! It was this dog which caused the loss of his only child. The Count had bought it of Vergani, who brought

the animal to the chateau ; and on his return to steal the dog, found the child just within the wood : of the two, he preferred the infant ; and it was sent to Marvelli, at the concealed glen in Calabria.

It was about the price offered for its recovery that the dispute had arisen.

Marvelli intended to have sailed round Cape Spartivento, and to have landed at Roseto, a small town in the Gulf of Tarentum ; but seeing he was pursued, he steered towards the coast of Greece, until he got too far to turn back, on account of the provisions and the quarter from which the wind blew. Isabella had but a vague notion of all this, and was only right in one or two particulars.

Marvelli had intended, with the money he had taken and the reward offered by the Count, to have retired from piracy on land,—from his association with a horde of contrabandists,—and from his acquaintance with Vergani,—who then, as now, directed affairs at Naples, and concealed his produce in the almost inaccessible mountains of Calabria. Here Marvelli commanded ; and the interference of Vergani, and his wish to possess the child, in order him-

self to receive the reward, which was enormous, led to the battle and the blows, and, finally, to all the miseries of one born in splendour, and nursed in the lap of luxury.

The old woman seemed the only servant of the establishment,—and yet the chateau would require at least twenty to keep it in proper cleanliness,—and she was by no means as active as the disposition of Vergani could have wished. Every now and then he looked at the sun, and knew to five minutes the hour of the day. He began to grow impatient; but he had a great prospect before him, and an honourable retirement, with a fearful character: he therefore was resolved not to lose the present opportunity, and continued encouraging the dog.

The old servant knocked at the Count's door, and was desired to enter.

“Always, good Count,—always angry. Will your heart never know the luxury of forgiveness?”

“Not until it has known the satisfaction of revenge. For twelve years have I promised myself that satisfaction; and oh! if ever chance should throw him in my footpath, (he who has

so much injured me,) by that I swear—and he pointed to a crucifix—and have sworn for years, that I will be dreadfully, fearfully revenged. For what purpose did you disturb me, at the moment I was glutting myself in imagination?”

The Count Maraviglia was about fifty, but of a strong frame, and vigorous health. His grey hairs might indicate a worn spirit; but his quick and resolute eye, his brawny arms and sinewy legs, showed his strength unimpaired. He would for hours and hours, at night, roam over his dark wood, fancying he heard the voice of his beloved child, and the exercise he thus took kept him in robust health; but he never slept without his vow of vengeance being repeated, and his first words breathed the same determined spirit.

“There is one outside who would speak to you.”

“Of what?” said the Count, hastily.

“I know not; but he is a strange man, of good appearance.”

“His name?”

“Whatever you please to call him; for he says by any name he may be called.”

"Tell him to go hence. I have no means, if I had the will, to be hospitable,—although I could buy half Naples. If he wants to eat, commend him to the house across the hill; if he loiters, place the dog upon his track."

"He knows the dog, and called it by its name."

"Has he ever served me?"

"Not within my memory."

"He must be of uncommon blood to have won Nettuno's heart. He may come in."

Vergani had not been idle. Apparently playing with the dog, his eyes surveyed the chateau: there might be wealth here, and little hazard in obtaining it. He followed the old woman to the Count's room.

"He is here," said the woman; and, opening the door, Vergani entered.

"You have to speak with me, I am informed?"

"And rightly," replied Vergani, after having made a most gentlemanly salutation; "but as we all have our fancies, mine is never to speak before a third person."

"You may retire, Francesca."

The old lady again crossed herself, closed

the door, and muttered,—“ No, no ; the devil never likes witnesses.”

“ Your business, sir ?” said the Count, sharply, pointing to a chair.

“ Is yours,” replied Vergani, in haste.

“ Then it is easily dispatched. To what does it relate ?”

“ Your child.”

The Count started on his feet, and with a quivering lip, as if the words had unmanned him, he faltered out a repetition—“ my child ?”

“ Ay, your child.”

“ Does she live,—does she live ?” said the Count, falling into Vergani’s arms. .

“ The child lives, is well, and waits but for the promised reward, to be restored.”

“ It can be paid in a moment ;—it is in the house. Bring me but my child, and twice the sum is yours.”

“ The original was no trifle, Count ; would you sign a bond as to the double ?”

“ Directly. But how shall I know my child again ?—how shall I be certain it is her ?”

“ By witnesses beyond all doubt. By the man who stole her,—by the mark made upon

her arm before those witnesses,—and by the words of her own mouth.”

“Heavens! what a ray of hope breaks upon my almost distracted mind! When can I have her again safe under my own roof?—when shall I clasp her again in my arms?—when feel and know myself a father, with an inheritor of my own blood to inhabit this castle?”

“I must go,” said Vergani, looking towards the window.

“When shall I see you again?”

“To-morrow, at noon.”

“Bring with you the bond,—bind me as tightly as the worst of lawyers can invent, I will not shrink from the word. Your name?”

“José Vergani.”

“José Vergani! Then a double pleasure awaits me.”

CHAPTER V..

“JOSE VERGANI,” said the Count to himself. “Now is the mystery of the dog unravelled. On him, for years, have my suspicions been fixed, and through him a proposition came, of a similar nature, many years ago. Since then he declared his inability to aid me, and of a sudden withdrew from Gaita, where he then lived, and bore but an indifferent character; but my revenge shall sweep him from the earth. I feel a renovated being,—firstly, I am convinced my daughter lives; secondly, that by stratagem I may discover him who has blighted my life.”

Vergani, clear of the grounds, struck through the same path which led over the mountain. “So eager to see her, so ready to double the bond, more may yet be got. The Duke and

the Prince must now be made jealous. This is a golden affair ; and Benvenuto, removed, perhaps ruined, his vessel probably confiscated, will never cross my path. I forgot my candles to St. Francisco—but he shall have double to-morrow. The saints must make some allowances for the hurry of business.”

Arrived at the cottage, he took the old woman aside, and bade her have her room prepared for a strange lady ; and the strictest orders were given to keep her away from every one,—not even the daughter was to see her. “ You know,” said Vergani, “ I reward well—so do I punish disobedience. Look you, mother, if this woman escapes, if any one sees her, you may beg your bread in the streets, and another will occupy this cottage. She will be here about two in the morning, and land at yonder point by the cave. Keep a vigilant look-out, and if there be cause of alarm show the signal. I shall be here to-morrow ; and if your charge grows riotous, you have the means of making her sleep without much endangering her health. I fancy she will be more inclined to doze than to talk.”

"Your orders shall be obeyed."

"It is better that they should be, if you value comfort more than beggary."

Vergani, having changed his dress, took his bundle, and, with the activity of a younger man, was soon on the high road to Naples.

This cottage stood away from the high road, and was concealed from sight. A small rising ground hid it entirely on the land side, and the thick grove of trees in which it was ensconced veiled it from the sea. It was Vergani's property—the fruit of successful contraband trade, and more useful for that purpose from the large caves which were near the shore, and yet almost in the centre of the wood.

The woman and the daughter lived there, strangers to the world. Whenever they saw more of the bustle of life, it was at Naples, when Vergani required their presence, and they were brought in a boat. For more than fourteen years had that old woman and her daughter resided there, and never had a stranger, excepting Marvelli, ever crossed the threshold. Although it stood within a quarter of a mile of the high road, so thick, and so apparently path-

less, was the underwood of the plantation, that no one crossed it.

All had gone right at Naples,—indeed, seldom any undertaking of Vergani's went otherwise. Quick in his resolves, daring in his undertakings, with a clear head and ready hand, he was as formidable as a foe as he was useful as a friend. Money was his sole desire, yet he gave liberally where he calculated upon a generous return.

At ten o'clock, when all was beginning to be hushed, Isabella, scarcely sensible, was taken into the cool night air, and walked towards the beach. The night was calm and clear, and the sea scarcely rippled to the shore. Afar off was heard the serenade of some devoted lover, whilst all the bustle and noise of human kind, struggling for subsistence, and toiling for a paltry recompence, had gradually subsided into silence. A boat's bow was on the beach, within a few yards of where Laura and her charge were seated.

“How beautiful is this!” said Isabella; “and how well it harmonizes with the fearful depression of my spirits! It is strange, this great de-

sire to sleep, which for ever seems overcoming me. I feel a languid sensation which dulls all energy, and my appetite and my spirits have forsaken me."

"It is the change of air," replied Laura. "At this season of the year, few strangers can overcome it; and many, like yourself, only leave their houses in the evening, when the breeze is cooler. Some go out in boats into the bay, and soon recover, assisted by the bracing coldness of the sea breeze."

"Look yonder," said Isabella, already much recovered; "there is a boat with a red light—how beautiful it looks on the water!"

"It is some fisherman, who, perhaps, makes known to his family that he is near at hand. How calm and still everything is around! I envy those poor fellows who enjoy the coolness of the water."

"And so do I," said Isabella; "how my heart throbs to be once more on that placid ocean!"

"It need not wear itself out for that," said Laura. "Let us get into this boat—it belongs to my husband—and we can go a short distance and look upon the town. I have rowed a boat

half my life. I love the excitement ; and as the night is calm there can be no danger."

Isabella readily entered into the plan. She was placed in the boat, and Laura, launching her with scarcely an effort, pushed the boat from the shore as she jumped into it. It was evident she had not overrated her powers, for she handled the oars like a practised person. At first they drifted off gently, but little by little Laura stealthily applied more force, which the increased phosphorescent sparkling of the water would have betrayed to a practised eye.

Isabella mused unsuspectingly on the scene. Her heart was full—her present strange existence—her future hopes and fears—came over her like a dream, and her eyes fell upon the scene with all the vacancy of a trance. She was suddenly awakened to a sense of danger. The boat with a red light was alongside, and four men were on board. Laura was in the other boat. They were separated—the one boat made for the shore, and the four men, without a remark, pulled with all their power, making for the northern part of the bay. Before two o'clock, Isabella was a prisoner in the cottage ; and as the clear moon shone through

the trees, she could form some idea of her secluded position.

She asked no useless questions. She was told that she would be attended upon with all kindness—that no harm or insult would be offered her—that escape was impossible—and that any attempt must prove abortive, and lead to unkindness and restraint. There was a degree of benevolence even in the manner of announcing such a disagreeable truth, and Isabella, at once resigned to her fate, retired to her bed. One thing was evident—the change was for the better; everything was clean and neat, but everything was awfully still, monotonous, and melancholy.

In the meantime, Benvenuto had been released—a wholesome bribe to the officer made matters easy. All Neapolitans, like Russians, can be bribed; the smallness of their pay, and their general propensity for gambling, make money the *summum bonum*. Benvenuto became, through the demoralized officer, acquainted with the informer, and the blood of the honest captain was roused to revenge. In order to forward that plan, he had conveyed to Vergani's huge cellars sundry contraband

articles, having a mark painted on each case, which his men, and the men employed as porters, could recognise. These were all safely stowed away without the slightest suspicion; and Benvenuto, like most Italians, slept soundly on board his own vessel, and had delightful dreams of vengeance.

The Count Meraviglia, after the departure of Vergani, soon found his way to Naples. Possessed of great wealth, he naturally had great power—for one means the other. He had not been seen in the town for years, and on his inquiring for the chief of the police, he found one of the friends of his boyhood in that high and responsible situation. The warm friendship of youth returned in all its former force upon the recognition. The long story of all the sufferings experienced by the Count were listened to without the smallest signs of impatience; and it was only when Vergani's name was mentioned, that the chief of the police seemed agitated.

“Vergani,” replied the Chief, “has been for some time carefully watched, but eludes us like a shadow. He seems ubiquitous, and so well informed is he of all our arrangements, that he

himself denounced the captain of a schooner as a contrabandist, only the day before yesterday, when we had organized a beautiful scheme by which we were to have taken him in the act of aiding and abetting in the smuggling ; he foiled us thus, and left Naples ; but I hear he is just returned. We must not alarm him, or the child you hope to find will be removed to Calabria, where long ago Vergani himself lived, associated with a band of ruffians, who saved the government much trouble by quarrelling amongst themselves and separating. We have no doubt that the celebrated St. José, as the lazzaroni call him, has still some communication with those parts. Your offer to pay the reward at once might excite him to an attack upon your house, and the dog would evidently be no protection. To-morrow, at twelve o'clock, you say, he is to be with you—leave the rest to me ; await his coming. We must not surprise him hastily, or he will retain your daughter in some seclusion, and the principal object of your life will be lost. Fear not my wanting activity in so good a cause ; besides, it is a righteous and just cause, and the cause of my friend."

Meraviglia shook his hand warmly, and the tears started from his eyes. "I am more bound to that child, from the circumstance of her mother dying shortly after its birth; and the last smile which lit up her countenance before she expired was occasioned by the solemn oath I swore, to love and cherish that infant. It was my blind kindness that suffered her to play about unwatched, because she loved independence; but who could have imagined, that on such an estate, so secluded, a child could be an object coveted, unless for the sake of a reward, and this was sought, but never obtained."

"Farewell, my old friend; business shall not make me forget your cares and your hopes. Before long, we shall see the Count Meraviglia the first at the court. New prospects will arise when your daughter is restored, and the solitary abode will be converted into a palace of hospitality."

The net was spread to enclose Vergani; but they had to capture a man as subtle as a snake. He moved about like a phantom, apparently openly—always covertly. Benvenuto knew him well, and feared his associates, and

yet he was desperately resolved to be revenged. Accordingly, he sauntered from his vessel, and after visiting one or two of his companions, he walked to the chief of the police, and obtained admission there under the pledge of secrecy and of protection to himself. He related the smuggling event; the marks, and the places where the property was concealed.

"When rogues fall out," said the Chief, "honest men get their due. You were so bound up with him—how came you to quarrel?"

"About a woman," replied Benvenuto.

"I thought that was an affair of a stiletto, amongst honourable men of your calling."

"It was no intrigue; it arose from a lady I brought from Spain, whose father Vergani knows, and for whose restoration to her family we expected a great reward, to be shared between us. I took the lady to his house, and then he, to place me in a position so as to render me completely in his power, denounced me to the police. It is now my turn to repay him in the coin which I borrowed of him."

"And where is this lady now?"

"Concealed in his house, I believe."

“ And is she contented ?

“ St. Francisco de Padua only knows, for Vergani took care I never saw her again. Ah, signor ! Vergani, his wife, and his chief assistant, would puzzle the Devil himself, if he sought to catch them unawares. They never sleep all at once, and I am as well aware, as that I am here, that he knows well enough where to find me at this moment, and, unless I can get your protection to my vessel, you will have to make inquiries about my death by this evening.”

“ We will see you safe to your vessel, good man.” And, rising from his seat, he desired one of his attendants to escort Benvenuto to the schooner.

Vergani's whistle would have brought many to the summons, and the police of Naples knew how insufficient they were to seize this saint of a lazzaroni, without occasioning a tumult. Besides, it was requisite to have something tangible for the arrest ; hitherto, nothing was kept in his house, and if placed there for the moment, always removed. Now, the forced restraint of the woman might succeed, and one who formerly had been of a desperate gang

which infested the road about Terracina, and who had, to save himself, sacrificed the rest, and become a useful man to the state, in the shape of one employed by the police, was duly instructed in his lesson, and sent to inquire about this woman.

The better to obtain the protection of Vergani, he rushed suddenly into his house, and throwing himself on his knees, besought protection and concealment, as he was pursued by some soldiers, for having revenged himself on a man with whom his wife was too intimate.

Vergani, who always seemed forewarned of danger, called upon one or two of his men to seize the intruder as a murderer. "I conceal no person, and no property," said Vergani. "Justice will be done you by the law, and those who administer it. Let the police be informed of this."

The wily fellow acted his part to perfection. He begged, implored, supplicated, and, when he found Vergani inexorable, he went into so well-acted a fit, that Laura, who had seen a few in her time, declared it proper for medical

aid to be called in, and the nearest barber was summoned.

The fit had subsided, but left the patient so weak that he could not stir. Vergani, who always looked on with an eye of suspicion, desired he might be turned out ; but the barber, a very influential person, who was somewhat alarmed for his own reputation, having been called in, declared that the man would die if left in the sun.

"Then let him stay where he is," replied Vergani ; "but let him understand, that he is only kept here until the police arrives, or he, breaking the restraint, escapes unaided."

The sufferer expressed his gratitude, and lay down on the floor, in the most public and inconvenient part of the house.

"Take him up stairs," said Laura, "he will be more quiet." And forthwith the spy was placed in the part he most wished to visit.

His eyes languidly travelled over the room, and the only thing which seemed to indicate anything like the residence of a woman, was a dark thick veil, which was on the sofa. By degrees, this adept first sunk into a fainting fit,

and afterwards counterfeited sleep so admirably, that the man sent to watch him ventured below, to rejoice his heart with a glass of Rosolio. That time was not lost. The room was examined, but no trunk, or box, or any indication but the veil existed, and as the spy was sure of protection, he took the liberty to conceal this in the red shawl which was tied about his waist. He soon went down below, sauntered to the door, and was allowed to escape ; it being no part of Vergani's plan to come in contact with the hounds of justice on any pretence.

There were fewer loiterers than usual about Vergani's house ; but he remained at the close of the evening, sitting listlessly at his door, whilst his wife bustled about with unusual importance.

"Signor Vergani," said a tall bony man, "I have an order to examine a certain cellar in your house. Last night goods were seen taken from a schooner, and watched 'to your house. My men are numerous, and are within hail. Let me do my duty, without hindrance."

"By all means," said Vergani. "I will accompany you. Ho, Laura ! give us lights, and

bring me the keys. So well informed, good sir, pray direct me as to which you will search first."

"This one," replied the officer, looking at the house, as if verifying the marks by which he was to be directed.

"Good," said Vergani. "Let this be opened. Will you descend?"

"After you, signor. You know your own house best, and can conduct me."

"By all means; but mayhap you might wish one or two of your men to accompany you?"

"It would be as well." A signal note showed men at all points, carelessly advancing, apparently unconcerned. A warning of the hand beckoned two forward, and the rest turned upon their heels, and seemed to walk away.

"That is well planned," said Vergani; "but what for? If you wish it, have all your men. Search, and satisfy yourself; Vergani has nothing to conceal—nothing to fear. I will show you the way. It is rather deep, and we keep it closely locked. This way—mind, the ladder may be slippery. Mark, here is a round mis-

sing. Take care, good gentlemen,—that's safely done. Now sir, here is the light—this way." And Vergani led them to a stone door, which he opened. "There is nothing kept here. My wines are further on."

"Proceed."

He led them through extensive cellars, all empty, until he appeared confused, and said, "That is all—I have no more."

"Pardon," replied the officer; "one more in this direction."

"Ah," said Vergani, "I had forgotten this. I keep my wine here. Pray examine."

The last man who came in, had been directed to shut the door, to prevent the escape of Vergani, and it was done. "Good," said the officer; "here are the marks."

"What marks?" said Vergani, as he approached the officer.

"There; these are the goods I came to seize."

"Pray take them," said Vergani, who at that moment extinguished the light. "I wish you joy of your prize."

A dead silence ensued for a moment, but something like the closing of a door was heard,

and a retreating whistle and a song announced that Vergani had found another exit, and was walking very leisurely away. In vain the officer and his men called; when they ceased, they could indistinctly hear a note or two, and then all was silent.

“He is off!” said the officer; “but we can soon find a light.” And he took from his pocket a flint and steel, and by lighting a cigar, produced a flame, and obtained light. They found themselves enclosed, without the possibility of escape. The cases were every one empty, and no ingenuity could open the door by which it was supposed Vergani had retreated; neither could they retrace their steps, but were snugly impounded.

CHAPTER VI.

VERGANI was seen slowly walking to the beach, and embarking with another man in his own boat. The men previously stationed by the officer did not interfere with him; they had no orders to that effect, and Neapolitans, then as now, are slow to incur either risk or fatigue. Idleness at Naples amounts to a virtue. It is covered with a silken net to enclose the idle and secure the frivolous; a murder might be committed in the streets, and not a man would trouble himself to seize the perpetrator of the crime. The busy activity of the chief, who was anxious for the capture of this man, led to his being followed. A person was despatched on horseback to ride along the

coast, but not to interfere with the dreaded José, further than to watch his motions.

In the mean time, the Count Meraviglia, distracted between hope and anxiety, took precautions against a midnight intrusion, by summoning his peasantry, and selecting a few in whom he had most confidence. To these he mentioned his apprehensions. One remarked, "that mayhap the man feared was the St. José of the lazzaroni?" The Count confirmed the remark, and a general inclination to depart was visible, so much afraid were these men of one apparently so quiet, and yet in reality so formidable. José's vengeance was more feared than an eruption of Vesuvius; but as the Count was charitable in his solitude, and derived his greatest source of gratification from assisting those around him, the gratitude overcame the apprehension, and four or five were quartered in the château.

In the mean time, Vergani had arrived at the cottage, and proceeded to the apartment of Isabella.

"You find this abode, I hope," he began, "better selected for your recovery from your

sea voyage than my house at Naples. I have directed that you receive whatever you require."

"Excepting," said Isabella, haughtily, "my liberty. Why am I here detained? why forbidden to venture beyond the door? Am I your prisoner, that you use me thus?"

"There are people at Naples who would injure you, and mar your prospects; the brightest hope you could entertain will, by to-morrow's sunset, be realized. You will be in your father's arms, and he is a man of high degree."

"Then why keep me here? why not at once take me to him?"

"It is a Neapolitan's nature to go slowly—neither will I be spurred forward against my better judgment. Could José Vergani live, if, when he obtained a prize, he gave it to others unrewarded? Your liberty might compromise my life. Look you at this mark upon your arm; that mark was made by my hand when you were stolen. Two other children were taken by others. To assure ourselves to whom you respectively belonged, the initials of each of your names were marked upon the left

arm ; the other two were returned for their ransom. Your father vowed vengeance upon those who had robbed him, and was so violent in his wrath that we feared to return you. Marvelli placed you beyond our reach. You return now when time has soothed your father's rage, and retirement from the world has made him more eager for your society, than for vengeance upon me. I require the ransom to be paid, and it is promised. When it is done, you are free—you become, from an outcast, the daughter of the great Count Meraviglia. You see I work but for your good, and what may your liberality offer for this great benefit I bestow ?”

“ What do you merit for all the misery I have undergone, and for the load I must ever bear upon my heart ?”

“ I exonerate myself from all but the theft. If I had been listened to, you would have been returned with the others. It was the cupidity of Marvelli, who, knowing the riches to which you were heiress, wished to force the Count to a higher reward ; upon this we quarrelled, and you know the result. Remember this—at present you are my prisoner, an hostage for a

ransom. In five minutes I could embark you for the very spot from which Marvelli took you. In an equally short time I could make you the mistress of a duke or a prince, and in concealment force you to accept either the one or the other. Their offers are high. I own to you that I covet riches ; for this have I toiled for years, and not unsuccessfully. Your return depends much upon your promises ; firstly, of secrecy, sworn upon the blessed crucifix, as to him who took and him who restores you ; secondly, that annually, a sum large in appearance, small in comparison to the good you receive, shall be paid me. This done, we stand thus—you will be restored to your rank and station, I made affluent ; you will retain the power of violating your oath, I the power of revenge. You have to choose between the sacrifice of your money or the life of the lowest—that life which is burthensome in youth, and loathsome in age. But mark well this—the oath here written, and which on your knees, before this crucifix, which many a dying lip has kissed, you will take, will be followed by one from me, that I will never molest or betray you, as long

as you hold to your contract ; but that the instant I am betrayed, or the secrecy disregarded—this!” And drawing from his red band a small phial of a clear fluid, he showed her the word *veleno*. “Or this!” And a stiletto, the same rusty blade, with the polished point, which she had remarked in his room, was exhibited. “I am everywhere ; the power of José Vergani is greater than the Pope’s. Are you content to swear?”

“I am ; but I regret to do it, since the Count Konigsmark has been deceived by Vratz, who spoke of you honourably.”

“Sign ! Read this on your knees, and hold this to your lips. I tell you, that many who have sworn upon this crucifix, and broken their promises, have, at the last minute of their existence suddenly terminated, confessed their perfidy on this very cross. Beware, therefore !”

“I have no choice, but obey, resolved never to betray you under any circumstances, and to pay this amount annually, when I have the means.”

“Enough ! I shall know of your ability to pay as well as yourself. It is done ! Mind !

should I stand at the bar of justice, and you sworn to speak the truth, my identity is to be denied in all and every case."

"I swear!"

"Hark! there is my whistle. Remember!"

"And to-morrow?"

"You will be recognised as the young Countess de Meraviglia. Again!—then the danger is nearer than I thought."

Vergani, with the activity of a greyhound, dropped from the window, and in an instant was lost to sight.

What a torrent of thought rushed over the mind of Isabella! yet one predominated—the hope of being the lawful bride of Konigsmark. She forgot, and she forgave, as only woman can forgive, the injury and the neglect she had experienced. As a countess of high rank, of large fortune, of known family, she would become his equal; and she still believed in his love. Such is ever the confiding woman—betrayed, and yet believing, neglected, yet still loving, confident of infidelity, and yet forgiving. A new dawn seemed to break upon her, a new sun seemed about to rise, and Vratz's remark of her taper fingers about to be realized. She

felt that inward elasticity of mind which sometimes is believed to be the forerunner of a fortunate event, as those whose health is neglected, and whose spirits are low, augur the coming of misfortune. There is scarcely a moment without these fanciful impressions upon the minds of all ; and history makes mention of thousands who have believed themselves forewarned of their death, and in consequence made preparations for it, whilst others have courted fortune even in lotteries, believing that *something* good was about to occur.

Isabella's mind, recalled to itself after the lapse of some moments of hope and joy, naturally turned to the present scene. Vergani, on hearing the second whistle, had spoken of dangers nigh at hand ; instead of going out by the door, he had preferred the window, and from that side the thick wood had concealed him in an instant. Then what could mean the oath to which she had voluntarily sworn ?

The greatest admirers of Isabella could never have accused her of too great a submission to the duties of religion. A thousand chances to one were against her ever having confessed. Curiosity might have tempted her within the

walls of St. John, at Valetta, and the Spanish capital would have shown her the "irradiated shrines, or emblazoned floors," which dying misers had bequeathed to atone for sins unrequited ; but no warnings of conscience, no ebullition of the heart, had ever prompted her to visit these sacred fanes, in order to pour out her soul in prayer, or listen to the exhortations of the priests. In early life she had no opportunity, and Konigsmark weaned her from all religious thoughts, making himself her earthly divinity.

Still the oath resounded in her ears as a most sacred obligation. It was, besides, an honest bargain fairly made—she, on one side, stipulating to observe silence, and pay annual sums ; Vergani offering, in exchange, to restore her to her father—to her rights, titles, and estates. She looked from her window, and she heard unusual shouts ; these sounded strangely in the almost universal silence. The bark of the dog, and the voice of the men had, at length, penetrated the thick forest. Once or twice she thought of crying for assistance to liberate her from her gaol. Then she remembered Vergani's look, and the rusty stiletto. Again

she almost took courage, as a strange voice seemed to come from a not far distant point. At this moment she felt a tap on the shoulder ; she turned, and the woman under whose care she was placed, warned her of her oath, closed the window, and, leading her along through various places, finally deposited her in a cave. "Remain silent, and you are safe ; advance, scream, or call for assistance, and Vergani's threat will be put in execution."

"But, I pray you," said Isabella, holding the dress of the woman, "tell me, why am I thus persecuted ? What have I done that thus illegally I should be detained ?"

"You have committed the crime of being a rich man's daughter ; and here you must atone for it until you get absolution."

"But leave me not in this dark place alone—this dreary cave. I feel afraid to move."

"There is nothing here will hurt you. In half an hour, or less, you will be restored to your room."

"No—no !" said Isabella, with an imploring voice ; "there is some deed of darkness to be committed. I pray you, good woman, do not commit the deed."

"Bless you," said her gaoler, "your death would be the greatest calamity that could happen. Your life is worth thousands and thousands. You are placed here merely that no such calamity should occur. I must not further trifle with time. Sit down on those dry rushes. Believe this a church, and say your prayers. Hark! I hear my daughter's voice. Hush!" and she extinguished the light—"keep where you are, and again I warn you that no harm shall happen."

A dead silence ensued. Isabella felt convinced that she had a companion in the woman; but she was mistaken. The cave was well known to her, and she retreated cautiously.

Not many minutes had elapsed before Isabella heard the voices of men in a contrary direction to that by which she had entered. One seemed louder than the rest, and it cheered on a dog. "Seek him—seek him, good Carlo," she heard distinctly; "seek him, and my revenge shall be satisfied!"

The voices came closer; but there was no gleam of light; and Isabella was aware that she sat at the termination of the cave, and separated from those who seemed keenly bent

on pursuing some person. She rose from the rushes and felt the cave, following carefully round, in such a manner that she could regain her position. But there was no opening; still the voices were apparently closer. "Hist—hist!" said Isabella, in a low voice, wishing to draw the attention of the woman who had led her to the cave. There was no answer. "Say, madam, are you here? For Heaven and the blessed Virgin's sake, speak!" The silence remained undisturbed.

"My child—my child!" shouted the voice.

As if inspired by a conviction that she was the object sought, she called, with the shrill voice of a woman, "I am here—I am here! Rescue me—rescue me!" Scarce had she uttered the words, when she felt herself rudely seized by a strong arm.

"How!" said a man, "have you so little value for a life so well worth preserving, that you risk its loss for a day's liberty? But that more depends upon your life, than revenge would be gratified by your death, your father should find you a corpse, and your dying shrieks should lead him to this spot."

"Spare me—spare me!" said the unfortunate

Isabella. "I could not control the desire of being liberated from this dreadful cave."

"Dreadful! Have you never been in the dark before? What is there dreadful in a dry cave? Hark how you have led on the dogs! There—your voice is recognised by that Benvenuto, who thinks he can find the passage."

"It is she—it is she, good Count. I would swear to her voice amid a million. This way it came."

"No," said another, "it was further in this direction. Seek, good Carlo—seek. The dog will give us warning if we are right."

"Call to her, good Count."

"Isabella—Isabella, it is your father calls! Answer me, child, and your rescue is sure."

"Do you feel this sharp point against your neck, fair lady? Raise but your voice one note above a whisper, and your moments are numbered. Ah, the dog may sniff, and the men may search, but you are a safe prisoner, and I a safe fugitive."

"Now if I were in the light I would do it, and brave all, even your strength!" And she searched for the dagger which had preserved

her Konigsmark's life from the bull, and which she ever wore about her.

"This way, fair lady. You tremble, as that hoarse Captain shouts your name. If your desire is so ripe for shrieking, you shall be gratified. Now, you still hear your father's voice—answer it; by my honour, which is a stricter bond to me than your oath is to you, I will not harm you. Call, and say you are here."

Isabella, fearful of the stiletto, shrieked, and breaking from the hold of Vergani, advanced at random. She soon felt herself against the cave; and, with a heart beating fearfully, and with a tremulous clutch of the dagger, she awaited the touch of Vergani to direct her aim. How different did she then feel from what she did when her love-lighted eyes saw the impending danger of her lover, and animated her with superhuman strength and courage to strike the deadly blow. Her own life, though so well worth preserving, never gave her half the resolution; and in the dark, striking at random against one whose name was a marvel, and whose deeds were on every tongue, whose courage, strength,

skill, activity, and resolution, made him more than a match for those of double his muscular power, she held her heart to check its beating, which she imagined she heard distinctly ; then, with the cleverness of her sex, she knew that Vergani would come slowly along the cave in search of her ; she therefore walked forward with timid step, until she felt assured that there was ample space for a man to pass between her and the boundary of the cave.

All was silent. In vain she listened for the slightest movement. Her heart beat fearfully quick ; but her courage, with the emergency of the case, mounted at every pulsation. At last, she overpowered the feeling, and stood like a tigress, prepared to face the worst. She held the dagger firmly in her grasp, keeping her arms folded, to occupy the less space. The voices, still heard, became fainter in the distance, until at last not a sound reached the ear. Still, awfully still, was the moment. The eyes, though opened, were useless—the very breath of life was carefully drawn—not a limb was moved—and even the very wink of the eyelids seemed fraught with peril—useless precautions against imaginary danger.

Vergani enticed her to shriek, in order to draw the attention of the Count from the only place where the communication existed ; and when she broke from him in one direction, Vergani took the other, and, familiar with every turn of the cave, he left her to her fears, and now was heard, apparently far off, imitating a female's voice, and calling, " Father, father ! save me, save me ! " She at once comprehended the cheat which had been put upon her, and replacing her dagger, gave a deep, deep sigh.

Vergani had been watched, as was mentioned. Benvenuto had been apprised by the Chief of the Police that he must accompany the Count, who, with an armed party, went in pursuit of the daring smuggler. A large reward was offered for his capture ; and Benvenuto could identify him. They had ridden round to the point where the boat had landed, and, in searching near the place, a small cave was discovered. It was instantly supposed that this was the place of concealment, and, with eagerness, the party followed their anxious leader. The cave, like the Cretan Labyrinth, seemed interminable ; and frequently, after pursuing a path hewn out with care, and which

betrayed marks that not long since it had been visited, they came to the place at which they had entered. Once they had arrived close to the place of Isabella's concealment,—her shriek had made them take the wrong turning ; and Vergani's imitative voice had led them into another part, which conducted again to the opening.

This watching the boat and arming the men was known, as soon as it was done, to Vergani's confederate, who, sharing in all enterprises, was not likely to betray him. A faithful man of the gang was sent to the cottage. The whistle apprised Vergani that he was required,—the second, that the danger was imminent. In a moment, his resolution was taken. More of his gang were ordered to the wood ; and the Count and his party were watched. At last, they emerged from the cave, and, overcome with fatigue, threw themselves on the beach. Now they were an easy capture ; but Vergani never shed blood if he could avoid it and be safe. His revenge was keen against the men he had most injured—the Count and Benvenuto. Calling to his confederate, he gave him some hurried orders, and striking through the wood, was

soon far away, and on the road to the Count's chateau.

Isabella, worn out with fatigue, fear, hunger, and, worse than all, blighted hope, fell down almost exhausted; and, dreading the future malice of Vergani, and having sealed perhaps her own ruin, she became again a woman, and burst into a flood of tears.

CHAPTER VII.

It was noon. The Count sat in his room, anxiously watching the clock ; the pendulum vibrated, and the monotonous sound of the tick continued. In the room adjoining, two men were stationed ; around his house, carefully concealed, were others of the police ; and by his side, his face glowing with indignation and hatred, sat Benvenuto. The worthy Captain was long ere he could accept the invitation of the Count to be seated, and his eyes kept examining the room—now surveying the gilded cornices, now wondering at a marble table. He held his hands one in the other, as if afraid some awkwardness of the limbs, if allowed to be at liberty, might be prejudicial to the fur-

niture. The quarter struck, and the Count broke the silence.

“He comes not—his hour is passed.”

“And I doubt, Mister Count, if he will come at all. It was the worst generalship—saving your presence—hunting him up, when he was coming of his own accord, I ever heard tell of. It’s an even wager if he and your daughter are not half way to Calabria before this.”

“If he is,” said the Count, “the police of Naples are not worth a rush. The boat was destroyed—the road in every direction watched.”

“Vergani cares little for boats being burnt, or roads being watched, especially when half the men employed are in his pay. I have known him attend a trial, when the evidence was such as would have condemned him, if he had been a prisoner. I have known him prompt the lawyer; and myself was present when he gave the clearest evidence that he himself was at that moment one hundred leagues off. I’ll be bound he knows as well as you do, Mister Count—and I beg your pardon for thus expressing myself before you—how many men you have got here—where they are—and all their names.”

"Impossible," said the Count. "Hark! Nettuno is growling; it is he."

"I'd wager half of Barcelona against a dinner of macaroni, that it's not Vergani, or any one belonging to him!"

"The dog grows fierce," said the Count, "and yesterday was quiet when Vergani approached. See, there he walks to the door."

"It's one of the lazzaroni he has contrived to rouse into sufficient activity to come thus far. Well may they call him St. José; none but a saint could do that."

The old maid brought in a letter; it was clumsily folded, and seemed to have been carelessly written. She said "a strange man—certainly not the gentleman who called yesterday—had brought it."

The Count took the letter. It began thus: "Vergani to the Count de Meraviglia. When I pledge my honour, I never forfeit my word. Is it just and honourable, when a bargain is made, to seek the life of one of the parties?—does not the agreement make both sacred?—is it not like an honourable hostage? I could have killed you yesterday; you were once within reach of my stiletto. I spared you,

because I had agreed to communicate with you this day at noon. Your daughter heard your voice, and I made her answer it. Where is she *now*? You cannot blame me. Had you not visited the police—had I not been watched, surrounded, pursued—and had I not heard, ‘Seek him, and my revenge shall be satisfied!’ your daughter would have been with you now. Our compact is broken; your daughter’s fate is not yet decided; she may remain my servant, or a duke’s mistress. Let Benvenuto beware! José Vergani loves a former friend for a foe: he was to have had half your reward. He shall not share in the price of her infamy; that would be a sin for so honourable a man; and I will have no partner in crime. I give you one more chance. If the ransom is increased one hundred scudi—if the Count Meraviglia to-morrow makes oath before the figure of St. Francisco, in the church of Santa Maria di Piedigrotta, or before the sacred Virgin, where, on the 8th September each year, the king and royal family kneel and worship, that he will learn to be a Christian, and forget his revenge—that the money be brought by himself to the cave, where yesterday he fool-

ishly thought to entrap his foe—then José Vergani swears that the daughter shall be returned to the father, her identity proved beyond a doubt, and her beauty unimpaired from grief. Vergani answers for no more;—from Benvenuto you can best learn how she became his passenger. You will write an answer by the bearer; and you may encourage him to activity by the application of a stick. Ask him any questions you think proper; but, remember, your reply fixes Isabella's fate."

"Impertinent scoundrel!" said the Count; "does he dare dictate thus? His house shall be destroyed—his wife imprisoned. He shall be hunted from the earth; he shall know no repose; and his execution shall hang over ever minute of his existence. What say you—you who were to have had half the ransom, or shared the price of infamy? You shall glut my revenge, if I fail with this devil, who defies all law."

Benvenuto answered not, and the Count strode through his spacious apartment. "Can you not speak, you spawn of a bad sea?"

"I can speak, and the truth also; and, although poor, can revenge an insult, as I can

be grateful for a good service. I swore to protect this girl, now supposed to be your daughter. Vergani says he can prove her identity. He can prove anything, but an honest man. Go to-morrow to the church of Santa Maria Piedigrotta—swear to forget your revenge, and do so—give the additional one hundred scudi ; or rest assured that Vergani will not want a wife whilst your daughter lives, or a certain duke a handsome mistress. He could have stabbed you, yet he respected you. I feel I am not so likely to escape.

“ And what know you of my daughter? How came she on board your vessel ? ”

“ I know but this. The Count Konigsmark, well known for his desperate bravery at Malta, placed her under my care ; I was to deliver her to Vergani, who was to find her rich father ; and I was to receive half the money paid. You know the rest.”

“ Then, after all, she may not be my daughter ? ”

“ Vergani says she really is so. You have nothing to trust in but the words of a brigand and a smuggler.”

“ I will go ; and I will go unarmed, unat-

tended ; this strange man, who defies all law, seems yet to have a strong notion of honour." As he said this, he wrote two lines—" I agree to the terms. At the appointed hour and place—unarmed, unattended—on my honour, I will await you."

The lazzaroni was dispatched, the police were dismissed, and Benvenuto, with sorrowful countenance, rose to depart.

" You fear for your life ?" said the Count ; " if so, wait here, and be in safety."

" It is only prolonging my misery. Unless I can get to my ship (and then I am not safe even from my own crew), my death is certain. The spirit of Vergani is behind every tree ; he sees with a thousand eyes ; his strength is in the arms of a multitude. I pray you may be satisfied that Isabella is your daughter, and that the cloud which settled over your house may pass away, and leave only the clear and sun-bright sky of old age."

" You shall not go alone ; I will accompany you."

" It would be only giving you another painful scene in life. Farewell."

Meraviglia looked from his window, and saw

the sun-burnt sailor quickly leave his premises. The police had preceded him, and were using their utmost speed to gain Naples before night set in. Not so Benvenuto. Believing in the certainty of Vergani's revenge, and the impossibility of evading it, he resigned himself to his fate; said numerous prayers; but resolved to make such a desperate resistance, even against any odds, that his courage should be respected. He even sang as he walked along; and the more dreary the part, the louder he chanted his merry barcarole. Before him was the lazzarone with the Count's answer; and so leisurely did this man perform the service required of him, that Benvenuto was soon by his side.

"You are not the quickest bearer of a dispatch," began Benvenuto; "'tis of importance, and Vergani awaits you with impatience."

"I may go as leisurely as is my pleasure, or sit down to refresh myself with aqua vita and macaroni, without incurring the displeasure of St. José."

"How so, good man? Did he not desire you to be quick?"

"And did he not receive the answer five minutes after I had it?"

Benvenuto looked round with a certain countenance of awe, and then, with a quivering voice, asked—"And where is he now?"

"You look alarmed, good Capitano Benvenuto!"

The Captain stopped, and stared at the man.

"Take your hand from your stiletto. What have you to fear from me? In spite of your perfidy, you are a good and honest-hearted sailor. Vergani admires the dexterity with which you repaid him. It was all fair; only you may have to say masses for the souls of three or four gentlemen, who, through your intelligence, are as yet, perhaps, alive in the vaulted cellar where your goods were placed. What say you—shall I be the means of reconciliation between you and Vergani? or do you prefer to live for another quarter of an hour his enemy?"

"He made me his enemy, when for years he had been my friend."

"Ay, and dealt honourably with you."

"In all but the last affair."

"It was necessary to remove the girl, even where you should not have known her retreat."

"But for the share of the ransom?"

"If Vergani had stabbed you, your widow would have received it."

"You seem well informed of Vergani's intention. According to the servant at the Count Meraviglia's, you were but a lazzarone, and not over communicative."

"The evening air and some of the Count's wine has made me perhaps more active and loquacious. To the point: Are you willing to be Vergani's friend or his enemy?"

"His friend!"

"Your hand and your oath."

"I give both freely."

"And I accept them as cordially."

"Vergani!"

"Your humble servant! Thinking I might accidentally be shot by the police, I changed dresses with the lazzarone, who by this time is fast asleep, not far from where you hunted yesterday for me. Come on more quickly, man; the sun is already down, and the dark shade of night is resting on the trees."

"You mentioned some men left in the cave!"

"Yes; I introduced them, in the most

friendly manner to the empty boxes, and left them there to measure themselves for coffins. If they starve or commit suicide, that is their own affair. As for ourselves, your vessel is clear?—when can you sail?”

“To-night, if requisite.”

“Not so; the offices are shut, and forms must be observed; to-morrow will be time enough; to-night I will ship my goods, money, and men, and to-morrow’s last minute shall see Benvenuto a rich man, with money sufficient to keep his wife and children in affluence. You may either sell me the vessel, or share my fortune elsewhere.”

“I understand, and I will speak freely. I would rather remain at Naples. Give me the fair price of the schooner, and what is honourably my due from this transaction, and I will take the vessel to sea, embark you and yours, where and when you please, and part with you a friend ready at any call.”

“Good; it shall be arranged to-night. We must strike off here, and take the upper path. Hark! the whistle—these honourable people are on the alert, and I must go anywhere but

home. Do you think the Count will come to the rendezvous ?”

“ Certain.”

“ And pay ?”

“ Every farthing.”

“ And become a good Christian, and forget his revenge ?”

“ That is doubtful.”

“ We had better part here. Your hand again. Will you be true, and keep the secret of my plans and projects ? Swear by the Holy Virgin and St. Francisco.”

“ Ay, and by St. José.”

“ Go to your vessel ; before long you shall hear from me ; and mark, the man who brings you this ring will speak and act for me. Good night !”

At one bound, Vergani gained a narrow path, and struck into a lonely part of the suburbs. A shrill whistle was heard on the right hand, and Benvenuto continued on the public road, vainly endeavouring to discern anyone, although it was evident he was watched, and that Vergani's men were on the alert. It was dark when he arrived on board his vessel.

The lazzaroni dress was a sufficient disguise for Vergani ; a man at once desperately courageous, ready in resources, quick at invention, and determined in action, his life had been one continued adventure ; and so nearly had the toils of the law been twined round him, so many a time had the net been spread, and the lure used for his capture, and so very often had he escaped, even when escape appeared almost impossible, that he had grown bold upon his success, and had often entered the police office, and given evidence in favour of himself. At this moment, he felt inclined to risk his precious person, and glean some intelligence ; and, having entered a miserable abode, he in a few moments came forth again dressed as a man who hires out curriculos, and who stands behind to flagellate the horse.

There was a bustle in the street, and it required no personal observation of the prisoner to recognise Benvenuto, whose voice convinced his friend that he was a captive. Poor Benvenuto was hustled rudely by his guards ; and, although he swore most fervently that he was not Vergani, or anything like him, in shape or make, he was hurried along and placed before

the chief—a crush of the people followed the prisoner's entrance, and in that rush Vergani was safely conveyed into the hall of justice ; there also was Vergani's wife, and the question to be decided was, if Benvenuto, or any other person there, was Vergani or not ; the prisoners who had been confined in the cave had been liberated by Benvenuto, who, before he went on board his vessel, recommended the wife of Vergani to aid in the captives' liberation. This she refused ; never meddling, as she wisely remarked, with her husband's affairs ; but a man who acted as wine-drawer, undertook to release them at Benvenuto's suggestion ; and now that good-natured man, the wife, and Benvenuto were all respectively charged with being concerned with, and under the authority of, the ubiquitous Vergani.

Benvenuto was recognised instantly, and would have been discharged as soon, but for the evidence of one of the men, who declared he watched the prisoner in close conversation with the lazzarone who was entrusted with the letter from Vergani ; and that, being well convinced he was the man to deliver the answer,

he had followed Benvenuto to Vergani's house, and saw him, after speaking to the wife, descend to the cave with the wine-drawer, who, the witness assured the court, was no other than Vergani.

The wine-drawer looked the personification of innocence. "Why, the witness is mad!" he said; "Vergani is neither tall nor short, fat nor slim, whilst I am notoriously small, with an inclination to be large. If by doing a good action a man is likely to be in a bad position, St. José be my witness that, if your Excellency was in the cave, you might starve before I would release you."

"I should think it nothing more than probable," replied the judge, "that if a villain caught his greatest enemy, he would not be in a hurry to let him go free."

"Just so," replied the wine-drawer; "and it seems especially applicable at this present moment."

The assembled Neapolitans did honour to the reply in a hearty laugh; in the midst of which a clear voice was heard—"Well said, Thomaso!"

Thomaso knew the voice well, and, with the

quickness of one devoted to his master, he looked in another direction.

"Who made that remark?" said the judge, angrily.

"Vergani!" answered a man from quite another part of the hall.

An evident bustle took place, the doors were closed, and the three people imprisoned were placed to survey every person who passed out; and each man of that dense crowd was obliged to walk one by one from the hall of justice.

"At any rate, your Excellency," said the wine-drawer, "let me out, for it is quite evident I am myself, and no one else."

"Go," said the judge, "by that door, which leads to your gaol; you are his servant, and his partner in crime."

"And your Excellency will not come and release me; it being, as you remarked, not at all probable, that if a villain caught his greatest enemy, he would let him go free." The man carelessly turned to go, giving a peculiar whistle.

"Let's look at your face," said one of the men; "you look like Vergani."

"By my faith!" said the man, in the peculiar pronunciation of the word in Naples; "you must be 'ubriaco.'"

"Ay!" replied the man, "that may be; but this dress does not well become you; and the men of the *curriculos* don't carry rings on their fingers."

"Then it appears," replied the man, "that you are not the best judge of dresses and ornaments. Now, look well in my face—Am I your *contrabandiste* or not?"

The bold, easy manner of the man induced another of the three who had been imprisoned to say, "That does not resemble our man at all; let him pass!"

"Ay!" said the *curriculo*; "and mind you look well at every one's face; this fellow, I suspect, found some full bottles in the cave. Good night, Signor Buonavista! By St. José, you should be employed always to detect smugglers." The crowd behind pushed forward the man, who, finding himself free from the mob, gave a sharp whistle, and disappeared. Benvenuto retired to his vessel, and on arriving on board, found a man, in a sailor's dress, in the cabin, quietly helping himself to

some brandy. The captain started back, but the stranger showing a ring, easily recognised as Vergani's, quieted all apprehension.

"To our business, good Benvenuto," said Vergani. "We can arrange it better ourselves than with a third person; and, remember, I am one of your crew."

"Were you in the court?"

"To be sure; and have already sent to free Thomaso. Without him, I cannot embark what I require."

"It will be difficult to release him to-night."

"And is this the remark of one who has lived in Naples? By this time, he is free, and no blood shed. A few scudi would buy all the justice of Naples; and, as for the police, I would wager the value to be received to-morrow, that I would engage every man placed to stop smuggling to carry the goods to their proper destination. They have often carried them for us, and the guards on the quay have kept their eyes towards the sea, whilst we passed behind them with the contraband articles. When Thomaso arrives, you shall hear my plans; in the mean time, fix your price on the vessel."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE execution of Vratz was followed by the retirement of Konigsmark. The clergyman, faithful to his promise, delivered into the hands of the Count the two hurried lines of his once faithful servant.

Although acquitted by judge and jury, the people of England saw in the Count an accessory before the fact, and the leading man who planned the murder. Under these circumstances, even Konigsmark had not the audacity to visit the court ; but he retired, having again disguised himself, into one of the narrow streets of Westminster, determining to cross to Holland as soon as convenient, and there again offer his hand to the rich widow, not even now fifteen years of age.

In France, matters began to wear a serious aspect. Montague's love—if such a transient passion could be called love—for the Duchess had now taken a decided turn in favour of the daughter ; and this daughter was supposed, even by his sovereign, to be the King's child.

The Duchess of Cleveland was not slow to discover the intrigue, and in her letter to the King makes use of these words : “ As for my Lady Sussex, I hope you will think fit to send for her over, for she is now mightily discoursed of for the Ambassador.” Her suspicions were her spurs to vengeance, and she resolved to hurl Montague from his proud situation.

In the mean time, the soothing words of the Ambassador quenched every spark of suspicion in his wife. Alike proud of his talent, and blinded by excessive affection, her mind was moulded after his fashion, and she saw and thought as he wished her either to see or think. No woman ever more implicitly believed in the words of her husband, than did Montague's ill-used wife. There was a tone of gentleness in his manner when he wished to conceal his purpose, apparently so very natural, that she readily credited every assertion ; he threw

an air of diplomatic necessity about his visits to the Duchess, he made it appear positively requisite to *fête* the King's daughter, and be ceremoniously civil to her mother.

"I confess," he said, to his wife, "it is disagreeable to me, and must be annoying to you; but consider how capricious is Charles, how easily he could be reconciled to the Duchess, and how anxious he might become to see his natural daughter, the Countess of Sussex. Generally the Duchess sends her letters through me, and I, of course, avail myself of my position to see that nothing passes which might compromise us, taking care to send a strong antidote to the poison."

"But, my dear Montague, the scandal of the court here cannot be long concealed; and often when I have heard those old and wizened *debauchées*, who hang about the Grand Monarque, and who yet linger in the sunshine of beauty, saying aloud, that the ambassador's mistress looked well,—although the words strike deep in a heart solely and wholly yours, I cannot but tremble lest such gossip might reach our sovereign's ears."

"And it would signify little if it did, under

existing circumstances," said Montague; "but his daughter's fame would be a more serious concern."

"They say, Montague, that latterly your attentions have been much directed in that quarter."

"And with truth," said the ready diplomat. "For, seeing that she was surrounded by flatterers, and men who care little to violate the peace and happiness of a family, I threw myself in the field, and by keeping close to her, and using my assumed right as her protector, drove away the others, or, at any rate, made them respect what they were anxious to destroy. It is the misery of greatness," said Montague, with a smile, "to attract the attention of all the idle and the frivolous."

"I am sure," replied the Countess, "that, if grandeur has its pleasures, insignificance has its enjoyments. The very surveillance which is practised renders my existence almost hateful. I cannot walk, but I am noticed—I cannot move, but I am watched—I cannot speak, but my words are weighed—if I smile, it has a political meaning; and if I am low-spirited—and oh, Montague, indeed, indeed, I would never

appear so in your society—then my husband's intrigues are assigned as the cause. 'Un-easy sleeps the head which wears a crown,' Shakespeare says, and well I have experienced all the annoyance of a painful pre-eminence."

"Life, my dear, is made up of these little inconveniences ; but since all are, more or less, animated by ambition, I see no reason why we should not occupy the highest seat. Any man may fall, but the ascent to greatness and distinction is difficult."

"Well, I know you will chide me for it, but I would rather live alone with you in the country, and hear your praises, and blessings invoked upon you by our countrymen, than live here the wife of an ambassador, and hear the whispers of envy and jealousy, and the louder voice of detraction."

"My dear, if I lived in the country, I should see a gallows in every tree. How men of talent, with whom conversation becomes the vehicle of knowledge, can live amongst cows and sheep, and find music in a shepherd's pipe, is to me inconceivable. To rise every morning to see the same view—to waste existence in cutting drains, or imagining rustic seats—

to wear out the day in arranging disputes—to be annoyed by one's neighbours, and bored by one's friends—is a picture sufficiently striking of that 'retreat, retirement, rural quiet,' as sure to keep me from the country as a scarecrow is to keep birds from the corn."

"And yet I look forward to such retreat, retirement, and rural quiet, as a reward for all I have suffered amongst the busy hum of men."

"God help me!" said Montague to himself, "the woman is going mad." Then aloud, he continued, "If you, my darling, ~~so~~ set your heart upon it, your wish must be gratified."

"Only with you, Montague—only with you. To me it is a happiness to dream that the time might come, when, seated by our quiet fire-side, far removed from all the insincerity of the world, you would beguile the time by reading aloud some new work of interest, whilst I worked at my embroidery, or, when you were for a moment melancholy, to cheer you with a song. Oh, what happiness it seems, and yet far—far too distant!"

"If we were buried together in the same grave, I should think such recreation rather

worse than the solitude," murmured Montague. And then he said, aloud, "Quite beautiful!—quite delightful! It makes me almost wish to resign."

The Countess rose from her chair, and throwing her arms round her husband's neck, imprinted a warm and affectionate kiss on his lips, saying, "How kind—how very kind you are, my dear Montague!"

"And always, I hope, shall so remain. It is seldom, my dear, we have time for such delightful conversation—and this has cheered me for the moment. Then, again, comes the cloud of to-morrow; I have asked the Duchess and her daughter to dine here."

"What, again, dear Montague? Surely we need not make the embassy an hotel—it was but yesterday they dined here."

"True—true, my dear. But in the Duchess's letter I remarked something which I must manage to efface. Believe me, dearest, these reunions are to me the penance of my office, but they are necessary."

"If your Excellency would spare a moment," said Colonel Brett, "I have something of import to communicate."

"Excuse me, dearest, for a short time. I shall return with all convenient speed, to resume our pleasant prospects of the future."

"Now, Brett, what new wonder is this?" said the Ambassador, rubbing his hands, and congratulating himself that, under the appearance of the Duchess, he had the prospect of a delightful evening with the young Countess.

"Konigsmark has murdered Mr. Thynne."

"The *farceur*!" replied Montague, with a smile.

"Had him shot by the very man who accompanied him to Paris."

"That man will make a considerable figure in the world if he removes obstacles so easily. Of course the assassin will be cheered with hopes of pardon, until the cord is around his neck. Now we may turn him to some account."

"I had the good fortune to enjoy the same idea. Konigsmark has the command of a cavalry regiment here, and I have no doubt that he will soon be amongst us. The Lady Elizabeth is in Holland; if we could but entice her here, the marriage might be arranged."

"Ah! the report that the Countess arranged

for money the match with Thynne would be fatal—but we can try. Perhaps, we may assure her that, in the calm solitude of St. Germain, she may weep over her second widowhood for a week, and, as it happened before, by the end of the year she may become the Countess Konigsmark.”

“The Count will not, this time, stand out for ten or twenty thousand. He knows by experience how soon such a prize is captured when hundreds are in pursuit of her—so young, so easily advised and led.”

“You are right, Brett; and I am, of course, her best friend and adviser. I will make the Countess write, and place all our establishment in mourning. I never liked that Thynne—he was a fool, and dazzled only with a setting sun. He should have lent the King money.”

“But he was Monmouth’s friend!”

Montague cast a satirical glance at the Colonel, as he replied, “Have men *ever* friends in adversity?”

“I fear, your Excellency,” continued Brett, affecting not to notice the remark, “that the Countess of Northumberland will sadly grieve over her daughter’s second widowhood.”

"It will give her a pretence to shut her doors against the Duchess of Cleveland."

"And," added Brett, with consummate calmness, "also against the Countess of Sussex." There was silence for a moment. Brett's countenance remained unchanged, and Montague's piercing eyes and guilty conscience both warned him how truly that arrow had hit the mark.

"Shall I inform the Countess, and spare your Excellency the disagreeable task?"

"Brett," said Montague, as he laid his hand familiarly on his shoulder, "you ought to be an ambassador."

"I feel very grateful for the compliment; your Excellency can hardly place my talents on a level with your own."

"We must not inform the Countess of this news until after to-morrow. I have a reason, Brett."

"Perhaps your Excellency is apprehensive that the house may be shut up too soon?" Brett was annoyed at the remark concerning friendship in adversity, knowing that Montague never believed in the existence of a sound friendship, and considered all men, like him-

self, influenced solely by interested motives and the hope of wealth. Brett was another instance of the danger of familiarity with inferiors. He was quite aware of the Ambassador's new intrigue, and wished now to make himself of more importance in the necessity of buying his silence.

"You are right, Brett; you are always right. I particularly wish to soothe the Duchess of Cleveland."

"It is a very natural wish, your Excellency. A woman neglected is a fierce enemy, and the preference of a daughter's charms to her own is seldom forgiven."

"You speak in riddles, Brett. What can you mean?"

"Merely that very few mothers would forgive the man who, having intrigued with them, kindly takes the daughter under protection."

"Hush, man!—hush! Neither of us is deaf. You need not bawl like a Caliban of a sailor in a storm."

"I spoke lower than usual, your Excellency."

"It seemed to me louder."

"Perhaps, because the subject was interesting, and the facts acknowledged."

"Why, it is all a mere court slander. In this city, the characters of ambassadors and priests seem public property; and women's reputations are whispered away without remorse, and without reason; besides, the thing is absurd. The marriage of the Countess was never consummated, on account of her tender age; and to fix an intrigue on a child is absurd."

"Your Excellency takes the strong side of the question; it is on account of the utter impossibility of such a thing that men like to talk of it."

"Of course, no one credits it?"

"Only the Duchess herself, I believe."

"You *believe*, Brett?"

"Yes, your Excellency. I believe; and I much doubt if she would bear out your expression, and prove 'that men never have friends in adversity.'"

"You seem nettled, Brett, at that remark. You would be an exception."

"I have no doubt of your Excellency's honour."

“Come, Brett, come ; no more of that asperity. Let us talk of other matters. Both you and I may make a better thing of the Swede than we did of Lord Ogle, or than the Countess is reported to have made by Thynne. Let us arrange that matter. We must somehow bring them together.”

“It would require much thought,” said Brett, doggedly. “Konigsmark is suspected of the murder ; and if the widow hear of this, she will not readily consent to meet him.”

“His acquittal is sufficient. Cannot we bewilder the brain of a girl of fifteen—especially where she is predisposed to hear everything that is good, and to receive with difficulty all that is bad, of a man she likes ? It would answer well in more ways than one. Bringing the Countess’s daughter here will keep out the Duchess ; and whilst these rumours are so much abroad, the less she is here the better. It would be an excuse, you remark, Brett, for closing the embassy. We will all go into deep mourning, and in France, you know, people neither go into society nor receive during the first months of grief. Come, Brett ; we will make a fair division of whatever we

can get. Do you undertake the Swede. It is easy to persuade him to come to France ; and the Countess will write the day after to-morrow, to Holland, to urge her daughter to visit her. And, my dear Brett, as neither you nor I are likely to be in adversity, we shall never have to test our friendship under the extreme touch-stone."

"I will do my best, your Excellency, and write forthwith to Konigsmark."

"I have a favour to ask of you, Brett. I am most anxious this letter should be given to the Countess of Sussex. It is merely an excuse for my apparent neglect ; for, since such rumours are rife—and I will not disguise to you, that I have heard them myself—I am anxious she should clearly understand my reasons for absenting myself a little from her society. I find great difficulty, from the foolish suspicion of the mother, in gaining an opportunity to convey to the daughter any letter ; but as you are admitted, and receive from the Duchess her letters to the king, you may find an opportunity of slipping this unperceived into the Countess's hand. You may place it in any book on the table, taking care to let her see you do it.

You can convey the meaning by a glance. But I grow old, and am in my dotage, in giving these hints to one who is himself so eloquent in all affairs of women, and so fortunate in their admiration."

Brett was taken in his weak point, and apparently without premeditation on the part of the speaker. His countenance brightened at the compliment, and he received the letter. Montague was not slow to perceive the change, and continued—"Lucky fellow, Brett; the Countess of Macclesfield is not a woman to admire every man; nor her husband to admit every person to his house. They tell me the Earl is more pleased with the raciness and poetry of your conversation after dinner than with that of any other man. Ah, Brett! I believe you blend Anacreon and Ovid, and either below, at the festive board, or in the quiet of the ladies' boudoir, reign pre-eminent."

Flattery is sweet to every man; few can resist that poison dropped artfully; few can rise superior to the words of the charmer. Our vanity and pride are ever ready to assist the speaker; and humpbacked men believe themselves Apollos, and crooked women,

Graces, when the "leperous distilment" assails the porches of the ear. Brett, who knew Montague thoroughly, could not resist the charms of flattery. The very idea that he could succeed in sapping the affections of the Countess of Macclesfield, was in his estimation most gratifying ; but he recovered himself as he said, "I fear, my Lord Rivers is no despicable rival."

"The greater the rival, the greater the stimulus to overcome the obstacle. One of your boldness, of your address, need not fear the repulse of any woman. You will deliver the letter, Brett, and write this day to Konigsmark. Give him to understand that the king has inquired about him ; say the regiment of horse is impatiently awaiting its commander ; and accidentally, as it were, let slip that Thynne's widow is about to pass the winter in Paris. I need not instruct one so intimately acquainted with the hearts of women ; but it is worth our while, be assured ; and when you have done this, do not forget the Lady Sussex."

Brett, who, like his master, was the slave of money, readily concocted a seducing letter to Konigsmark, which was directed to the Swedish

Minister, and forwarded. He then proceeded to the Countess of Sussex, who, with her mother, occupied a splendid rez-de-chaussée, in the Rue St. Honoré. The words which had given offence to Brett still seemed rankling in his mind; and, as he reasoned with himself, he could not see how in any manner they applied to him. Yet he felt as if the manner of Montague's expression had somewhat wounded him, and he knew the adage—"So live with friends, as if you might be foes." It appeared as if he said, "You are willing enough to be my friend in prosperity, but if the cold blast of adversity came, you, like the rest of the world, would go to the worship of another ascendant star." Musing on these words, and always giving them the blackest intention, the secretary passed from the Faubourg St. Germain through the gardens of the Tuileries, until he arrived at the house of the Duchess of Cleveland.

CHAPTER IX.

NEVER since her arrival in Paris had the Duchess of Cleveland received a visit from Brett ; she had met him frequently at the Embassy, but they seldom exchanged many words. In all the interviews, whether at receptions or at dinners, Brett seemed to play the part of purveyor of pleasure to the Countess of Northumberland, and was evidently instructed in the rôle by Montague, it being his object to keep his wife well engaged, whilst he carried on his intrigue with the discharged mistress of his sovereign. An excuse from one so well versed as Brett could not be long wanted, and he was ushered into the apartments of the Duchess.

He was prepared to see what met his eye—a room furnished in the height of Parisian ele-

gance; he therefore never chronicled in his memory the splendid fauteuils, the candelabra, and the thousand minor elegances and luxuries which crowd a well appointed room. The Duchess was not in the apartment; and Brett's eye fell upon a letter addressed to his sovereign. As, in all probability, that letter would be read at the Embassy, he turned his attention to a portrait of the Duchess in her younger days, before she became the wife of Mr. Palmer.

It would have arrested a colder man than Brett. Never had the painter's art given more life to beauty than in that exquisite portrait—it was still the image of the Duchess. The beaming eye, the pouting lip, the freshness and the glow of youth and animation, the swelling bosom, and the lovely figure, all contributed to arrest Brett; and in his admiration of the picture, he forgot his discretion as an agent.

Once he looked round; there was nobody but a servant, who informed him that the Duchess was at her toilette, and in a few minutes would avail herself of the unexpected pleasure of the visit.

In order to deliver the note to the Countess without the embarrassment of searching a

pocket, the note of the Ambassador was concealed in Brett's left hand ; and now, planted before the portrait of the Duchess, Brett scanned every feature, surveyed every grace, and, in the absence of mind occasioned by the all-absorbing portrait, he played with the note between both his hands, which he held behind him. Here was beauty a thousand-fold more enticing than Lady Macclesfield ; and there was a fascination in the eyes which followed every movement of his, which riveted him to the spot. By the side of this portrait there was one of an inferior artist, intended for the Countess of Sussex. The limner had been well instructed, and seemed to have drawn the girl with a portrait of the king before him ; and this was purposely done, that the Duchess might show his majesty the resemblance, and plant in his mind the certainty of the paternity.

Brett was struck with the similitude ; but again riveted his eyes on the Duchess, feasting upon the luxuriance of the display ; and, allowing his imagination to sport with his feelings, he became motionless with admiration ;

and such was his abstraction, that the Duchess entered the room unperceived and unnoticed.

The homage paid to her former beauty was not disagreeable to her. She advanced cautiously; when suddenly remarking a note in Brett's hand, and recognising Montague's hand-writing, her quick eye detected its destination. Instantly a thousand painful thoughts flashed across her. Brett's visit—the smallness of the note—and Montague's unusual absence on the day when it was his custom to call to receive her letters, suggested a multiplicity of conjectures. As carefully as she had entered, she withdrew to the door, which opened into the boudoir, and then, speaking to the Countess, she mentioned aloud her intention of driving to Versailles in the evening.

The voice recalled Brett to himself; the note was instantly concealed, and the obedient friend of the Ambassador bowed to the original of the portrait with all possible respect.

“His Excellency,” he began, “has desired me to wait upon your Grace for any letters you may wish to send to England. Owing to a

slight controversy with the government here, his Excellency is so engaged, that he is himself unable this morning to pay his personal respects."

Brett delivered his opening speech with all the coldness of a Lord Chancellor reading that of his Sovereign at the opening of Parliament; and when his eyes met those of the Duchess, the recollection of the picture flashed across him, and flushed his countenance. The Duchess was still beautiful; and in her eyes was that soft voluptuousness which the painter had faithfully depicted on the canvas.

"Pray be seated, Colonel." The Duchess pointed to a chair.

The room had a variety of looking-glasses; the one over the mantel-piece was large and costly; opposite to it was another of equal size; whilst two others, also opposite to each other, gave the room an apparently interminable extension. And, again, other glasses were so disposed, that every motion of a person in the room was visible in one opposite to which the Duchess sat.

"I grieve much not to see his Excellency to-day. I presume the pension paid to Charles

is somewhat in arrear. The Grand Monarque, so lavish of his subjects' gold on some occasions, seems inclined to retract his promise."

"I am uninformed, Madame la Duchesse," replied Brett, "on these points; indeed, his Excellency is the depository of his own secrets, and seldom extends his confidence to any."

At this moment, the Countess of Sussex entered, with a letter for her husband; and Brett, with the quickness of an experienced performer in such delicate missions, gave her to understand he had the billet-doux.

Artful, quick, and observant, the Countess intimated that she was aware of his intention; and the Duchess, who, apparently absorbed in adding a few lines to her dispatch, looked through her fingers, with which she shaded her eyes, and saw the communication.

Brett rose as the Countess entered, and bowed most distantly and most reservedly.

"Are we not to have the pleasure of seeing his Excellency, mamma, to-day?"

"I fear not, my child," replied the Duchess, with a coolness which contrasted wonderfully with the feelings which rankled within her. Colonel Brett intends himself to be an Amba-

sador, and is giving us the best possible display of his qualification, in withholding from us all information of Mr. Montague's occupation, leaving us to form our own conjectures.

"I am uninformed upon the subject, which I have no doubt his Excellency thought me unworthy to share ; but I left him in deep thought, and writing a letter of some consequence to his Majesty."

"Pray, Colonel, since you are thus far communicative, can you tell me if Mr. Montague writes often to the king?"

"Only, your Grace, I apprehend, when the subject is of vast importance."

"Ah, then to-day he has received some intelligence of such a nature. I read in your manner that you are not a newspaper, Colonel ; and, therefore, with your permission, I will finish this letter. Pray, do not allow my rudeness to interrupt any conversation with the Countess. What think you of her picture ?"

"I like it not in comparison with that of her mother. Lely has most faithfully transferred your Grace to the canvas."

"It is much flattered," said her Grace, without looking up.

"That were impossible," replied Brett ; " but I think the artist has not done justice to the Countess of Sussex ; although the resemblance is somewhat striking."

"They say," remarked the Countess, who really spoke innocently, "that my portrait much resembles the king."

"There is a great likeness, especially to the prints."

"We have one or two here in that portfolio, if you desire to make a closer comparison. Show the Colonel, my dear, those on the other table."

The Countess and Brett opened the huge book—the Colonel was nearest the Duchess—and after turning over some leaves, with the right hand, he held the cover with that hand, so as to shield his operations from the Duchess, and, with the left, allowing the Countess to see him, he dropped the note between the prints. The treacherous looking-glasses betrayed every action ; and the flushed cheek of the Countess witnessed her alarm at the clandestine communication now confided to a third person. She felt as if she were somewhat compromised ; but concluded that Montague had

not so acted without sufficient reason. She did not dare to take it before the Colonel, who, seeing her embarrassment, and comprehending it, closed the book, remarking that the resemblance was certainly strong.

The moment the book was closed, the Duchess called her daughter, and bade her carefully close the letters; she then called Brett, and made him survey the picture of herself.

"*La beauté de diable*—that of youth," remarked the Duchess, "lasts but a year or two; and I am astonished at my own weakness in allowing the charms of youth to mark the decay of nature."

"It is a faithful portrait. Well might we say with the poet—

' ————— here, in her hair,
The painter plays the spider; and has woven
A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men.'

Of a truth, madam, I may say, the picture seems alive; the statue of Pygmalion starting into existence has hardly more of life in it. I could gaze at it for ever."

"Whilst the original grows old, neglected, haggard, and forgotten, and sinks into her

grave—a prey to anguish and remorse.” There was a deep feeling in the utterance of the words, and to relieve them, Brett added—

“As yet, madam, you cannot quarrel with time. One so universally admired cannot but feel assured that a few years have added to, rather than detracted from, her beauty.”

“It is the difference, Colonel, of the bud and the blossom; as for the latter, the least rain-drop of sorrow, or the cold breeze of neglect, is sufficient to wither it into a miserable stalk! I cannot bear to look at it; it reminds me too much of all the sunny hours of youth and happiness, when I knew no care and experienced no sorrow.”

“Your Grace,” said Brett, smiling, “does not carry upon your features any mark of such uncomfortable companionship.”

The Duchess had turned away, and her eyes were suffused with tears: she recovered herself instantly. “My dear child,” she said, addressing her daughter, “are the letters closed? The Colonel’s time is as precious as Mr. Montague’s, and we must not entangle him in courteous speeches, drawing from him many compliments, and leaving him to certain re-

proaches—not only of his conscience, but of his Excellency.”

“I pray you, Madam, dispose of my time freely ; my best excuse to save me from reproach is in acknowledging that I was detained for your despatches.”

“Pray, receive them ; and as I shall see his Excellency at dinner, I will not further endeavour to draw from you the secret which now so much engrosses his time and attention.”

“I shall deliver the message faithfully.” The Colonel bowed gracefully, and took his leave.

“He is a man of much manner, mamma,” said the Countess.

“Pshaw, child ! what know you of men and manners ? He is as good in behaviour as the many thousands we meet with ; but he is hard of feature, and his remarks are those of one tutored by an experienced master : they flow not naturally ; and he seems for ever endeavouring to remember the right turn of the expressions. Go, child, and finish the drawing you were about ; I am anxious to show it to the Countess of Northumberland to-night.”

"Indeed, my dear mamma, I feel but little inclined."

"If I were only to see you at work when prompted by inclination, child, half an hour would be sufficient. Go—go; I have a letter to write, and would be alone."

"I can draw here, mamma, better than in your boudoir, and I hate being alone."

"Then, bring your picture into this room; perhaps the light is better."

The Countess left the door open, and was not absent a moment. The mother was convinced that she had seen the note placed, and the Countess dreaded lest, by any accident, a detection should take place.

"Now, child," the Duchess continued, "you can talk and paint at the same time, and my letter will not hinder me from being a good listener. What think you of Mr. Montague?"

The name brought the blood into the young cheek of the Countess. She could not control the sudden impulse; she felt the guilty mark upon her face, and she hesitated before she answered. Her mother's watchful eye on the mirror convinced her that she had struck the

right chord, which fearfully vibrated through her daughter.

"He is a very agreeable man," replied the Countess; "quick in his manner and his remarks; always lively in conversation; and, for a companion, the most agreeable in existence."

"For a description drawn off-hand by a young lady of fifteen, that is not bad," said the Duchess, with a smile; "and when you are alone, my dear, on what does this dangerous fascinator discourse?"

"Of various things. His interview sometimes with the French king—the strange people of the court—the remarks of French wits—the paint and the patches of the women—their dress, manners, customs, &c.; he blends them all together, making a most delightful mélange, as piquant as it is pert."

"Then you like his society?"

"Very much, mamma; he speaks so differently from others. He never eulogizes my dress, or bores me with the weather; and, although he is liberal in his compliments to myself, he never vouchsafes such idle nonsense on my couturière."

"Yesterday, when you drove in his carriage, did he speak of his visit to England?"

"What carriage? I never drove with him in his carriage."

"That is an equivocation, child, which I little admire. If he drove in yours, or you in his, it is of no consequence—the world would set the same value on the act."

"He draws a great distinction; for a lady to be in *his* carriage somewhat compromises the lady;—so, my dear mamma, I advise you to be more careful for the future;—but for a lady to take a gentleman into hers, that is nothing—positively nothing."

"You are a pert girl; it is not thus a child should address a parent. I have told you of this, because I have heard your name coupled with that of Montague; and his Majesty of England would be ill at ease—considering how much he has ever cared for you—if such reports reached his ears."

"I wonder why the King shows such a poor child as myself such attention!"

"There is nothing more natural. When I was much about the court, he was pleased to remark your infantine beauty, and it appears

he has never forgotten it. Here, child, take this key; open my gold case upon the toilette table, and under the last division you will find a small portrait; bring it to me quickly."

The Countess took the key, and departed. The dressing-room was the second room beyond the boudoir, and some time would necessarily elapse; but the Countess had not the slightest idea that her mother suspected the correspondence; and, humming a lively air, the beautiful, slight, elegant creature, glided from the room.

In a second the Duchess possessed herself of the note, and concealed it about her person. She did not dare open it, and risk her daughter's return. The guilty parent felt awed even before the guilty daughter. But oh! the pang—the dreadful pang, of finding a rival in one's own child! That child had been well informed by Montague, that her mother was the discarded mistress of the monarch, and that she still ruled him by her charms. This had been the poison instilled into the young and willing ears of the daughter—that the mother had risen to her height and power by the surrender of her charms; and she was taught to conceal

this knowledge of facts, and, by duplicity and apparent ignorance, perfectly blinded her parent. Even the Duchess of Cleveland felt her heart beat strangely; revenge was uppermost in her thoughts, and she cared not for the means, so she gained her ends; besides, she hated the Countess of Northumberland, for that proud woman had received her not as a friend, but as a forced acquaintance.

The picture was one of the Countess, as a child, and it was beautifully executed. Two had been done—one for the king, the father, the other for the mother; and on the back the hair of the parents and child were interwoven. On seeing it, a tear started from the Duchess, and coursed down her cheek, and the daughter, clinging around her, kissed it from her face. With a look of intense agony, the charms of the innocent and beautiful child were surveyed, and a smile of admiration was gradually succeeded by the darkest gloom; until the daughter, fearful of the mother's health, looked imploringly in her face, and said—"Mother, dearest mother, what makes you tremble thus? I never saw you look so dreadful before, or felt you thus agitated!"

"Look," said the Duchess, in a stern voice—"look at this picture!"

"I obey, my mother. It is of myself—at least, so you have told me—when I was about six years of age. Do I resemble it now?"

"In appearance, much. But look you, how innocent is the smile the painter transferred to the ivory—how much of childish virtue is in every look; now, turn you to that looking-glass, and see if your face retains the semblance. Why is that blush of shame suffusing your cheek?"

"It is but a flush of astonishment."

"See how I forget what you were, in the belief of what you are!" And she trampled the portrait into a thousand pieces. "If I dared, I would curse you; but, as the viper stinging the bosom which nourished you, I will crush you! Leave those fragments."

"I am only preserving the King's hair," replied the Countess, apparently unmoved. "I shall keep that as a remembrance of my father."

"It is done!—it is done!" the Duchess ejaculated. "The secret has been betrayed, and all my worst apprehensions rise before me in truth. What a fearful example I have set this

poor child, now treading in my steps! It is my fault—I am alone to blame!" And, throwing her arms around her, she implored her forgiveness.

The Countess of Sussex, a perfect adept in female dissimulation, affected to be overpowered at this feverish exhibition, but to be entirely ignorant of the cause. "Sit, good mother; here is some perfume; you have written too much, and are wandering in your thoughts. Let me open the window; the air will revive you."

The Countess of Sussex was at that hour not more than fifteen years of age!

CHAPTER X.

THE Duchess of Cleveland was alone in her toilette room. It was the hour generally devoted to that art, and the long toil was pursued by her with unceasing exertion. Every feature was set to school—every article of dress fitted with disagreeable exactitude;—it was the penance paid to fading beauty, when the impotence of dress is made the substitute for waning charms. She had dismissed her servant, and now, trembling as if afflicted with the ague, she held the unopened letter in her hand.

As yet, whatever suspicions she had of her child's frailty, she was far from being convinced of the fact. The manner that letter had been conveyed—the idle excuse of Colonel Brett's

visit for her letters, which a servant could as well have carried—the frivolity of the conversation, and the apparent embarrassment of the Secretary—made a thousand suspicions flash into a painful reality. It was the dread of finding her worst fears realized, that kept her wavering in her intentions; the hope that, after all, it might be some girlish indiscretion not amounting to crime—for who could suspect the innocence of fifteen?—got the better of her apprehension; and, drawing her chair closer to the sparkling fire, and placing a light conveniently behind her, she opened the letter.

Before, however, she read one word, she entertained a parley with herself upon the propriety of the act. “Is she not my daughter—my own child—of a tender age, unfit to guide herself? But again, have I not renounced my right to rule or govern her? By her marriage is she not a free and independent woman, responsible only to her husband? But the King—the King—what would he say if I allowed his daughter to pursue an intrigue, and become the scandal of Paris? A word from me may check her in her course—may save her from inevitable destruction—for Montague delights

in the publicity of his acts, and in this immoral age sees no crime in an intrigue."

Whilst thus the Duchess argued, the Countess had left her room, and, with trembling step and careful eye, entered the saloon. The door leading to the Duchess's room was shut, and not a sound was audible in that direction. With eager haste she opened the huge portfolio, and one by one she removed the several prints. As each one, from the end where the note had been dropped, was taken out, her manner became more agitated—her cheeks flushed—her eyes sparkled—her pulse increased the heaviness and the quickness of its beat; with greater rapidity, as each print destroyed her hope, did she continue to the very last, and then a sudden paleness—a ghost-like whiteness—drove the blush of the cheek, and the vermilion of her lip, from her countenance. She had seen him place the letter there—had herself witnessed its fall amongst the prints—and now it was gone! With the fulness of hope she again moved every print, throwing them at random on the floor; and when that was done, she burst into a flood of tears, and threw herself into a fauteuil, passing her hands

over her eyes, and pressing them heavily against her burning forehead. Suddenly she arose and placed herself on the sofa, where her mother had been seated, and raising her eyes to the glass, she saw that every act could have been seen, and no doubt existed in her mind concerning the removal of the letter. She now knew the worst, and prepared to meet the storm. Retiring to her room, and with a fortitude worthy of a better cause, and a courage which would have made a man a hero, she overcame all girlish fears, mastered every wavering expression of her countenance, and sitting down to undergo the long and painful performances of the coiffeur, read apparently unconcerned from a small book of poetry.

The Duchess, having decided that a parent never lost her authority, unless in direct contradiction to the wish of the husband, considered herself warranted in reading the letter; and, with quick and hurried glance, as if afraid of being discovered in an act she could not entirely reconcile to herself, and agitated with the worst fears as to the discovery she might make, and the apprehensions she might have confirmed, she read as follows:—"My dearest

little pet child—A circumstance of great importance has taken place, and which may somewhat mar our frequent meetings—meetings to me beyond all imagination most cherished—most beloved. You know I always told you how I became possessed of your mother's secrets, and how careful I was to counteract their effect. She has written to the King, your father, mentioning the report of our intrigue, and recommending him to send for you immediately. As well as I was able I parried this thrust, but did it, I am aware, badly, as I knew how true was the remark. Again,—my wife's daughter's husband has been murdered in London, and in all probability the widow will pass the winter here, so that my wife will seize this opportunity of closing the embassy, purposely to get rid of your mother, whom, you know, she hates. This will necessarily exclude you; and, in order to have a sure rendezvous, I have entrusted this letter to Brett, of whose loyalty and friendship I am well assured, and to whom, should you have an opportunity, you may always entrust an answer. I have no fear but that one so great an adept in the art of love will convey it in

safety. You know the small house situated on the right hand after leaving the Champs Elysées, and after having passed the summit of the rising ground. I have taken that house, and placed a confidential person in it. Every day when you ride out in your carriage you will contrive to be there about three o'clock, and await my arrival. On presenting yourself the first time, which I hope will be to-morrow, you will merely mention the word—'Vendome.' You will find a fire lighted, and every thing comfortable. Forgive the absence of the vocabulary of affection which I own is due to you, and which now hovers on my pen. Henceforward your love forms my existence. I live but for you, and have no words to express my gratitude for the burning delight I have passed in your society. I shall see you at dinner to-day; but I shall purposely avoid any communication beyond the most distant respect, lest the eager ears of those around us may be somewhat led to confirm these suspicions. Above all things, endeavour not to let our eyes meet at dinner; and we, being mutually assured of each other's undying affections, must do the

violence to our feelings of ceasing to behold, with that peculiar look of intense love, the person you most adore. You know all the libertines of the court say, 'Tout est permis à Paris, mais il faut garder les convenances.' Therefore, discretion, my dearest angel, and à demain." The initial, an M, was placed at the end. The Duchess gave a deep sigh. Her worst fears were realized—her daughter was her rival, and conspired against her. The man who professed the deepest love and affection for her opened her letters, became acquainted with her still lingering love for the capricious monarch, and had read all her remarks, and some written in haste and spleen against himself, thereby betraying that she had used him to gain her own purposes. A slight rustling in the passage made her instantly conceal the letter; and with a countenance as placid as a lake in the calm of a summer's evening, she proceeded to affix the various patches, which it was then the fashion to wear.

It was her daughter, who came prepared to meet the storm before the dinner hour.

"Ah, my little dear!" said the Duchess,

smiling through her paint and patches, "you have been expeditious to-day. Why, I am not half ready!"

The Countess, little expecting so endearing a salute, at once suspected that her mother was totally ignorant, and that Brett must have again possessed himself of the note.

"I hastened, my dearest mother, because you always accused me of keeping you in waiting."

"Look, my child, at the clock, and tell me what is the hour. I have been reading a part of Romeo and Juliet, and became so enamoured of the poet, that I forgot the hour."

"It is scarcely five."

"I have yet a quarter of an hour. If we go on increasing in the lateness of the dinner hour, I should not wonder if, in one hundred years, people of high fashion will not dine before eight; but it is agreeable. We have our drives before the day closes, and the evenings are always cheerful by a blazing fire, when the cold Parisian winter sets in."

"The Countess of Northumberland is always punctual, my dear mamma."

"And always cold, haughty, disagreeable, and reserved."

"It is her manner, and means nothing; but Mr. Montague always makes amends by his wit and cleverness."

"Yes!" said the Duchess, as she rose from her chair; "he is certainly a dear, clever, amusing man, whose society is courted by all, and who, by his noble hospitality, does honour to his situation. Call my Jezebel of a servant, I pray, and let me hasten my toilette."

All the penance of dress being completed, the Duchess passed through the saloon, and there saw the various prints in undisguised confusion on the floor.

"There," she said, carelessly; "I wonder who has been kind enough to throw my prints in this disorder?"

"In passing," replied the Countess, "I pulled the portfolio from the table, and left it there to be picked up by the valet."

"You gave yourself the trouble, my dear child, I see, of lifting up the portfolio itself, and left the lighter articles."

"I was fearful of being late at my toilette."

"It matters little, the servants will replace them. Come on, my child, and do not linger

over such an accident as if it signified the least."

On arriving at the embassy, the reception of the Duchess was, as usual, cold even to jealousy; but the Countess, considered as a child sacrificed at the altar of Mammon, was better received, and placed by the side of the ambassadrice. Montague made a low formal bow; his eyes betrayed no passion, and his tongue no word of affection; but Colonel Brett's manner was more unreserved than usual.

Montague paid much court to the Duchess, who received him with great attention, but never once throughout the evening did Montague approach the Countess, nor did Brett venture, beyond his usual respect, to exchange a syllable.

In vain, during the splendour of the repast, did the young confiding Countess, deeply enamoured as she was, seek a look of affection from the Ambassador. On his countenance there was a marked formality, and in his numerous witticisms he directed his words and his looks more to the Duchess than any other person present.

Perfectly convinced, from Brett's statement,

that his letter had arrived at its destination, Montague avoided meeting the eyes of his poor fluttering victim, who he saw could not master her feelings, and who, from time to time, looked towards him in all the eagerness of hope, to catch one affectionate glance. To the hour of departure, the same visible coldness existed, and Brett, as if tutored by the Ambassador, devoted his attention to others ; so that the Countess of Northumberland, animated by the best and kindest intentions, kept the poor child close to her side, and seemed glad to withdraw herself from the rest, and seek refuge in the artlessness and innocence of her conversation.

“ Now I am well assured,” began the Countess, who could hardly wait until the carriage door was closed, “ that what Colonel Brett told us this morning is strictly true. Why, Mr. Montague seemed labouring under a heaviness of spirits that was astonishing. He never spoke to me once ; and seemed overwhelmed in some thoughts which clouded his brow, and made him sad and sullen.”

“ Men, my dear, like the weather, have their sunshine and their shades—their fair and

their stormy moments. A man always perfectly calm would be as insufferable as one always stormy ; the variation is necessary to prevent stagnation—as the ocean would become putrid, if it were not agitated occasionally. I wish I could come at the secret. I am sure Louis has not remitted the money to our King ; but I could not glean it from Montague. Do not you find it very cold to-night ?”

“I was so lost in my wonder at Mr. Montague’s altered manner, that I never thought it was so chilly.”

“Oh, child, he will be all sunshine to-morrow ; men in his situation have sometimes duties the most delicate and the most disagreeable to perform. Why, from your pensive manner, one might fancy you had tumbled in love with the old man.” And here, as the Duchess laughed, the Countess felt the rush of blood to her face, and heartily rejoiced that the sombre lamps, here and there dangling from huge posts over the centre of the road, threw their dim lights on the top and not in the interior of the carriage. For her nominal husband the Countess had never felt the delicious sensation of affection and love ; in fact, she

was a wife merely in form and name ; but now she had been ensnared, and all the cunning of the sex came to her aid. Firmly believing, from her mother's affectionate manner, that she was ignorant of the rivalry which existed between them, she talked in her usual light, frivolous, and unguarded way ; but when alone, she pondered over the altered manner, the cold, formal salutation, the dignified reserve of him to whom she had given more than her heart. Glad indeed did she feel when the carriage arrived, and she found herself once more in her own bed-room, having kissed her mother and bidden her a good night.

The Duchess, impatient to be alone, still concealed the wish under an invitation to her daughter to sit and talk over the affair—the dinner, the dresses, and the manners of the company ; but the excuse of a headache, a complaint easily feigned, as it cannot be traced, gave one the pretence of retiring, and the other an opportunity of being alone.

The Duchess was nursing her venom. She betrayed no haste, but to her maid appeared to linger longer than usual before she dismissed her ; and even after that, fearing that the

Jezebel, as she always called her, might return, she sat down by the fire. But her countenance had changed ; there was no longer a smile upon that once beautiful face, but a sneer of revenge, a frown of undisguised hatred. She fastened the door, as was her custom, and drawing a small writing table near the fire, she wrote that famous letter to the king, still preserved among the *Harleian Manuscripts*.

Before the Duchess yielded herself to the persevering and persuading tongue of Montague, she had drawn from him the superstitious weakness of the monarch. It appears from Burnet, that “ the King had ordered him to find out an astrologer, of whom it was no wonder he had a great opinion, for he had, long before his restoration, foretold that he should enter London on the 29th of May, 1660. The astrologer was yet alive, and Montague found him, and saw that he was capable of being corrupted, so he prompted him to send the King such hints as would serve his own ends.”

In the passion the Ambassador manifested for the Duchess, he forgot his usual prudence : by way of enlivening his mistress with anecdotes as piquant as they were rare, he

from time to time made her acquainted with all the little arts he had used with this astrologer, to lead the King in accordance with his wishes ; and he had ascertained, from all the Duchess's letters, which, it has been mentioned, he always opened before he sent, that not one word of this secret had been betrayed.

The Duchess treasured this up with all the cunning of a naturally intriguing woman, and of one who always thought the tide of affection, so variable in Montague, might one day turn against her ; therefore, whenever Montague left her after a tête-à-tête, in which all the plans had been betrayed, she invariably committed them to paper, with their dates, and with the Ambassador's comments upon them.

She had now the whole night before her, for it was scarcely half-past ten o'clock, and to sleep were as impossible as for the blind to see. She first took the letter Brett had deposited in the portfolio of prints. She compared it, with all the coolness of a judge, with many of the notes and love epistles to herself ; of the handwriting there could not be a doubt—no, not even in the suspicion of the King. Every word was carefully scanned—the style, the abbre-

viations were exact; and, strange as it may appear, at this moment the Duchess wished, in spite of her own conviction, to find some dissimilitude which might calm her vengeance, and lead her to the hope that the note was a forgery.

What had happened was too plain for any one to doubt. The artful concealment of Mr. Thynne's death from the Countess of Northumberland was accounted for, in his wish that, at this last dinner, which almost all the ambassadors in Paris had attended, there should be a marked coolness and respect for the Countess of Sussex, which might, in some manner, cast ridicule on the scandal which had become rather rife; and as, after that day, the embassy would be closed, the last impression made on the public would be, that he was still devoted to the Duchess, and that the affair of the Countess was merely a blind. She now retraced in her mind how often Montague had declared the necessity of going to Versailles to pay his respects to the Grand Monarque, and how invariably the Countess went out on those days in her own carriage, for she was liberally supplied with money, and

had her own equipage and her own separate establishment. Here she was convinced how long she had been duped, even by a child of fifteen—that hurt her vanity, as much as the intrigue excited her revenge.

CHAPTER XI.

THE pen of vengeance is always sure to write ; to a vindictive mind, words are never wanting—to a revengeful spirit, the heart's blood is the ink :—

“ Heaven has no curse like love to hatred turned,
Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned.”

All former affection was forgotten, and the sacrifice of her daughter's honour weighed lightly in the scale in comparison with the Duchess's insulted and defrauded love. After the usual beginning, the letter was thus continued : *—“ I am so much afflicted, that I can hardly write this for crying, to see a child that I doated on, as I did on her, should make me so

* See English Causes Célèbres.

ill a return, and join with the worst of men to ruin me ; for sure, never was malice like the Ambassador's, that, only because I would not answer to his love, and the importunities he made to me, was resolved to ruin me. He has neither conscience or honour, and has several times told me, that in his heart he despised you and your brother ; and that for his part, he wished, with all his heart, that the Parliament would send you both to travel, for you were a dull, governable fool, and the Duke a wilful fool ; so that it were yet better to have you than him. But that you always chose a greater beast than yourself to govern you ; and that you had made him consult an astrologer for you, as if he did not bribe the man, to make you believe his wishes. He told the King of France, that many people had reported that he had made love to me, but that there was nothing in it, for that he had too much respect for you, to think of such a thing. As for my Lady Sussex, I hope you will think fit to send for her, as I wrote before ; for she is now mightily discoursed of for the Ambassador. If you will not believe me in this, make inquiry into the thing, and you will

find it true. I promise you, that for my conduct, it shall be such as that you nor nobody shall have occasion to blame me. And I hope you will be just to what you said to me, which was at my house, when you told me you had letters of mine; you said, 'Madam, all that I ask of you, for your own sake, is, live so for the future, as to make the least noise you can, and I care not who you love.' Oh! this noise that is, had never been, had it not been for the Ambassador's malice. I cannot forbear once saying again, I hope you will not gratify his malice in my ruin."

In this letter the mind of the Duchess of Cleveland is betrayed. She carefully veils her own intrigue, to make the complaint apparently emanate from apprehension, lest the affair of the king's daughter should become public. The abuse of the King by Montague—the betrayal, so carelessly done, of the astrologer, which the King had desired, to avoid all ridicule, to be kept a profound secret—she well knew would excite the vengeance and hatred of the monarch. And as for herself, the letter only means that *she* was not to be considered; because, if she did intrigue with the Ambassador,

she had the King's permission. The letter, apparently written in grief, and without any regard to style, was artfully contrived. She knew the weak points of the King—his fear of ridicule—his annoyance at finding himself betrayed by the man he had most trusted—and finally, that his Ambassador had intrigued with his daughter. She felt confident of success. She was sure the affair of the Countess of Sussex would crown all; and if she were doubted, the letter of which she had possessed herself was “conviction, strong as holy writ.”

“Now will I be fearfully revenged!” And with this feeling rankling in her bosom, she knelt down and said her prayers. With a heart beating high with exultation, she muttered over words learnt by rote, and said without feeling; they were mumbled as a form, for she had often declared she never could sleep if she omitted this ceremony, having performed this farce, she looked carefully at her night lamp, bolted her doors, folded the letter, placed it under her pillow, and soon experienced in her dreams all the delights she anticipated.

The Countess, on the contrary, was ill at

ease. She thought less of her fallen dignity than of the extraordinary behaviour of Montague, and, finding her bed any place but that of repose, she devoted her time to the Ambassador, and wrote him a warm affectionate note, in which she betrayed her love for him, and her total disregard for all its consequences. Again and again she inquired the reason of this sudden change, and, in conclusion, implored an explanation.

At breakfast, not a word escaped the Duchess, not a hint which could betray her intentions. The Countess looked discomforted and melancholy. Her mother attributed it to the variable weather, and the tête-à-tête, which endured an hour, was wholly occupied in the Duchess recommending a medical adviser, and the Countess resisting the proposition. At the conclusion of this time, the servant announced "that the gentleman had arrived." "Let him be shown into my boudoir. I will see him presently."

"Bid my page attend me in my room," the Countess said. Both separated; both felt assured that neither party was sincere. The Duchess had made it somewhat evident, from

her anxiety that the medical man should afford all the conversation, and the Countess, young as she was, had her mother's cunning and her mother's quickness, and saw through the device.

On arriving at her private room, the page presented himself. "Here, now," she began, "take this purse, and use its contents lavishly. It is my wish to know who is that man with my mother—his estate, name, lineage, and pursuit; and, mark me, I must be made acquainted why he comes here at this unusual hour, and for what purpose he is destined. Here also is a note for the King's Ambassador. You will give it into his own hand, and unobserved." She drew from her bosom the letter, and bade the boy remember that his future progress in life depended on three things—activity, secrecy, and discretion. "Go," she continued. "I do not bind you as to time; but do not return until your mission is fulfilled."

"Your are accustomed to such journeys?" said the Duchess.

The man bowed.

"And I am informed that I may place implicit confidence in you."

Again the man bowed.

"How long do you require before you are in readiness to leave Paris?"

"Half an hour."

"Go, and be expeditious. When you are ready booted and mounted, come to the bottom of the Champs Elysées, and there I will myself give you the despatch. Your reward depends upon your expedition, and I shall be well assured you have performed your task, by the letter you will bring in answer."

The man bowed, and left the room.

"He would answer my purpose well, if he locks up his secret as carefully as he does his words. Bid my coachman to come at two o'clock," she said, to a servant, who, in obedience to a summons, had come to the room, "and bid my maid attend me."

"I have a dress, I think," she continued to her maid, "much the same as the Countess usually wears?"

"Your Grace has the very fellow to it."

"Spare your words, and place it ready for me. I would be served, not answered."

"Your Grace asked me a question."

"Which could have been answered by your

producing the dress. Your voice is sharp and shrill, and penetrates my head, making it ache; besides, it is not my habitude to discourse with my servants. Your shoes creak; I pray you let them be thrown aside. Give me my dark veil; and bid the Countess's page come to me."

"He is gone out, your Grace—I saw him go."

"Enough—enough! I presume you saw him go, and thus became acquainted with the fact. When he returns, bid him come to me."

The poor maid, abashed at the continued reprimand, left the room; but she made ample amends, with her fellow-servants, for the restraint upon the natural liberty of her tongue elsewhere.

It has been mentioned, that the mother and daughter each had their separate equipages; and as each followed the bent of their own inclinations, it was not their habit to ask as to the employment of each other's time.

At two o'clock the Duchess's carriage arrived, and when her Grace was therein, she desired to be driven to the Rue de Varennes, in the

Fauxbourg St. Germain ; but no sooner had it left the gate, than the order was countermanded, and the coachman directed to drive to the Champs Elysées, and to stop about that part now called the Place de la Concorde. It required but a few minutes to effect this. The courier was there, and called to the side of the carriage, into which he was instructed to place his head. "Here is the despatch, to be delivered to the King. If you are overtaken, you lose your reward, for you have the means to get forward, as ample as those who might follow you could have. Much depends upon your despatch ; tarry not on the road, and remember, that your silence in England is as necessary as your prudence and circumspection here.—Go."

The courier cracked his whip, and the short stout horse plunged through the muddy streets of Paris.

"Drive me on the road to Versailles," said the Duchess ; and the coachman continued his way up the Champs Elysées.

On arrival at that point where now stands that mighty monument to the glory of the

French arms—the triumphal arch—the Duchess saw, on the right hand, a small house, surrounded by a wall. She desired her coachman to stop, and, having alighted, directed her servants to go with her carriage to the Countess de la Rivière, and place themselves and her coach at the Countess's disposal until four o'clock, at which hour they were to return for her.

This done, she approached the door, having ascertained that it was the only house in that then desolate vicinity. To her summons a voice inside, of rather an aged woman, asked—“*Qui va là?*” The Duchess, in the most juvenile voice she could imitate, answered—“*Vendôme.*” Immediately the door was opened, and, crossing a yard, she was ushered into a small and comfortable apartment. She might have spared herself the precaution of the black veil, for the old woman was instructed that she was not to notice the person who would come, and, if possible, to overcome the most fatal of all the faults of woman—curiosity.

Left alone, the Duchess opened a door, and discovered that it led into a bed-room, in which

was a blazing fire; the rest of the house seemed unfurnished, and there was no one in it but the old woman, who, like a cautious sentinel at the fortress gate, allowed none to pass who could not give the word.

Montague was too ardent a lover to be after his time. At a quarter to three, the noise of a carriage was heard outside, and the gate creaked on its rusty hinges. The Duchess threw her veil over her bonnet, and sitting down by the fire in the bed-room, with her back towards the door, awaited her faithless lover.

Montague, on entering, locked the door, and proceeded, with all the eagerness of desire, to embrace his young conquest. Without regarding the difference of figure, which the Duchess artfully concealed by bending herself down, Montague threw his impassioned arms around her, and was about to pour on her supposed willing ears the declaration of eternal love and affection, when his astonished eyes met the cold stony glance of the Duchess.

"What is this?" he said. Then instantly recovering himself, he resumed—"Ah! my good Duchess; always faithful to a rendezvous—always punctual to the hour."

"Good," said the Duchess, drily; "your Excellency is alike punctual, and, I hope, pleased to find me a little before my time."

"Indeed I am. I have so much to tell you, and so few opportunities, that I am delighted at this tête-à-tête; especially now that the Countess has closed the embassy on account of her son-in-law's death."

"As you mentioned in your note, sent by that most careful of Mercuries, Colonel Brett."

"He gave it to you, I hope, unseen?"

"Yes, sir; I can assure you it never has been seen by any other than myself."

"It was so intended."

"Then I wonder it was addressed to my daughter, and artfully placed for her to take. Cease, Mr. Montague, such silly subterfuges! You write to so many, you forget what you say; and I can see that you count on our former intimacy to stop the natural current of remorse and my just vengeance. Is not my daughter a victim to your vile arts? Can you deny a crime at which the worst would revolt? Was it not sufficient to decoy me from my sovereign, without embittering the few moments of pleasure left me in the society of my daugh-

ter? Nay, you worse than cowardly spirited cur, you have betrayed alike your sovereign and myself, and poisoned the child against her mother, by declaring that I was the mistress of the King, and that King her father. I have yet the spirit of a woman to defy your utmost malice; and now am convinced of all your mean and shallow devices, in having opened my letters, kept back those which might have hurt you, and written others to soften down my expressions. Your wife suspects our former intimacy—she shall be certain of it. The King believes in your sincerity—he shall be apprised of the seduction of his child; and the proud Montague will, before the summer commences, find another minister in Paris—himself disgraced, despised, and degraded.”

“Why, my dear Duchess, you are quite in heroics to-day. Come, come—‘unknit that threatening brow’—we, who have been such true friends, must not be enemies.”

“What! would you have me imitate your own baseness, and befriend the man who has ruined my child?”

“And what good can arise from the discovery? A prudent parent would conceal the

child's weakness—not hurt her reputation, by blazoning it to the world.”

“The world and I have long quarrelled. When I was the King's favourite, I felt its fawn; but, when I was dismissed, I experienced its cold disdain. I yielded myself in an evil hour to you; and, in the man I cherished and loved, I behold the worst enemy of my child! Your coolness, at this moment, shocks and revolts me; your presence is as hideous to my sight as that of the worst reptile; and if I could overcome the insult to myself, I cannot control my disgust at finding a rival in my own child. I came here, dreading, yet courting this interview. I find I have courage and determination sufficient to endure it; and, in the full conviction of your approaching ruin with your sovereign and your wife—(ah! that arrow struck your heart, for I saw the whiteness of your lip)—I rejoice in the triumph which awaits my effort, and which now—ah! start not!—even now, is far on its road to England.”

“You scarcely can have been so foolish as to have sent to the King? Believe me, he will not deign to read your letter. Besides,

he cannot credit an assertion so evidently false as that in reference to the Countess of Sussex."

"His Majesty, I presume, will pay more attention to your own handwriting. I compared it with notes written to myself. And, by way of assuring the monarch how great was your endeavour to win me, I have given some details concerning the astrologer, and quoted your own words concerning the Parliament, and your wish that they would 'send the King to travel.' You see I am cool and collected. I speak in the voice of a woman whose heart is broken, and who has collected the fragments, dead to all other feeling but that of unceasing revenge."

"Then I am lost; and you, who professed to love me, cause my ruin."

"You are repaid as is just. You professed to love me, and have chilled my heart against myself and my child."

"Cannot this letter be recalled, or another written, in some measure to soothe the King?"

"If, at this moment, the treasure of the world was at my feet—if now my ambition

could be gratified by striding over my rivals, being again the favourite of the monarch—if power unlimited were offered, affection again sworn to and foolishly credited—nay, if recalling that letter could restore the quiet of my mind, which in youth and innocence I experienced—I swear before my God I would not do it; but rather will I watch your degradation, and rejoice in your domestic calamities. My heart would once have revolted against such an idea, and the natural goodness which was there enshrined would have prompted me to forgiveness. I tell you that heart is shattered, and every fragment has again united in hatred of the world, in detestation of men, and abhorrence of Montague. I pray you, sir, retire; my carriage must be here now; bestow the word ‘Vendome’ upon more willing ears. The Countess of Sussex will leave Paris this evening, and never again will you hear of the Duchess of Cleveland, excepting in her voice of exultation at each successive calamity which awaits you, and her scream of delight when your degradation is effected.”

Montague made a last effort to soothe the infuriated Duchess, who, notwithstanding her

passion, controlled herself to admiration. A fixed, immoveable hatred seemed quivering on her lips; and, darting a fierce look of unrelenting revenge, she passed the door and gained her carriage.

CHAPTER XII.

THE trial of Konigsmark had fixed the stain of blood upon the Count in the minds of all men ; yet he was declared guiltless, and was free. With the audacity of his nature, he thought of presenting himself at court, where he was quite aware that the death of Thynne was by no means a displeasing affair ; still, the fear of a cold reception, and the evident scandal which would arise if he were received, kept him at home until the thick darkness of the London fogs sheltered him from observation.

The lively interest taken by the wife of the Spanish Ambassador at the trial, and the love of adventure always uppermost in the Count's mind, prompted him, when the dark evenings afforded him a concealment, frequently to walk

in the street in which she resided, and which was close to the scene of the murder. In vain he watched each person going to and from the house—he was aware his pronunciation betrayed him as a foreigner, and that his countenance had met the public gaze much too long to avoid a recognition ; at last, tired of walking and watching, he knocked stoutly at the door, and when it was opened, gave a note, directed to her Excellency. In it was nothing but an address in Westminster ; and, as her Excellency did not recognise the hand-writing, it was given to the Ambassador for an opinion as to who or what it could concern. The note, after having been scrutinized, was thrown into the fire and forgotten.

But the lady, for whom Konigsmark had perilled his life in the bull-fight, and who had left her father's house to share his fortune, still clung to the remembrance of the Swede, not with any love, but with a sincere pity. Her health had suffered much from the excitement of her journey to Barcelona—her discovery—the tyranny of her parent—and, ultimately, the marriage with the Ambassador, whilst her young heart was devoted to Konigsmark ; but all

past misfortunes and sufferings were little in the scale with the trial. There was no one who knew her secret. Not one suspected how much her life was concerned in that event. Around her every one saw the guilt of the Count. The judge's favour could not disguise the truth; and quibbles of law could not overcome such incontrovertible evidence. Thus it was that, having heard the matter discussed in private, and listened to the evidence in court, she had wound up her mind to hear the fatal sentence of death. The acquittal acted upon her as has been detailed; and from that moment she had gradually sunk, until now her feeble, attenuated frame could scarcely promise to be the tenement of life for a month. Neither had she, throughout that trial, once been able to fix the eye of Konigsmark; and to that moment she was ignorant if she had been observed by him, for in that court other thoughts than those of women occupied the mind of the Swede.

The shriek, and the order for the Spanish Ambassador's carriage, had arrested his attention, and thus induced him to hazard another adventure—for it was a fact he never had

recognised her, nor was he at all aware of the great interest taken by her in all the details of the trial. She died within a month of the acquittal, carrying with her the secret of her love, unsuspected by her husband, and regretted by her friends.

The letter written by Brett was received by Konigsmark. It was couched in warm terms, and declared strongly that neither the Ambassador, the Countess of Northumberland, nor himself, ever entertained the slightest suspicion derogatory to the character of the Count; and seemed to contain an apology for the trial, intimating a supposition that the Count had himself demanded it, in order that the public should thus be made aware that although Vratz was his servant, yet he was himself innocent of the foul transaction. Brett proceeded to hint that the Count was required in France, as his regiment was about to be ordered on service; and, in the most casual manner, towards the conclusion, hinted that the Ambassador had written to the widow, the Lady Ogle, as she was always called, (although Lord Ogle took the name of Percy,) to pass the first months of her widowhood with the Countess of

Northumberland, whose anxiety to see her was doubly increased by the misfortunes she had experienced. There was a slight allusion to the child's age and innocence ; and a careless remark made, that first impressions never were effaced, and that, to change the gloomy current of her thoughts, another marriage would be the most efficacious medicine. Such was the general tenor of the letter, and it instantly occurred to Konigsmark that England was no place for him ; he had not shown himself in public, and he prowled about at night fearful of a discovery.

The few papers published in those days still teemed with remarks upon the trial, the partiality of the judge, and the evident participation in the crime by the Count. These constant allusions—besides the very person for whom the crime was committed being now likely to visit Paris—the certainty of obtaining Brett's and Montague's assistance, provided he paid handsomely, decided the Count to leave England directly ; and, a fortnight or three weeks after the execution, he having, during that time, remained in concealment, the Channel was again crossed ; and Konigsmark, freed

from the apprehension of insult, cast aside his dark wig and beard, and assumed the jocund manner he had always maintained.

The scrap of paper sent by Vratz disturbed his mind—for he was naturally superstitious. It was headed “A dying man’s prophecy,” and was couched in these words—“The degraded hand shall take its own vengeance.” Not a night since its reception had Konigsmark slept without reading this prophecy ; yet, in spite of all his endeavours to unravel this mysterious expression, he never satisfied himself that he had arrived at its meaning ; but he leant most to the idea, that the degraded hand had some reference to the one which still wore the ring ; and that Vratz’s death would be avenged by suicide.

As Konigsmark cared very little for living men, he was not likely much to heed the dead. A gloomy superstition always haunted him about the child of his destiny, in which he clearly recognised Lady Ogle, and the wonders of the Egyptian sorcerer were fresh in his mind ; but neither ghost nor giant could daunt him. He was one of those fortunate men who might have asked the question, What is fear ? Even the quickened pulsation of his heart, as

he pondered over Vratz's words, was not applicable to fear, but to an excitement, occasioned by a doubt when this degraded hand should take its vengeance for the wrong done to its owner.

In the mean time, Lady Ogle remained at Amsterdam, and with her was the old Lady Algernon, who had never quitted her charge, or ever allowed the twice married lady to have an opinion of her own ; indeed, to this minute, she was tutored in her manner, and controlled in her expression, as when at Petworth.

"I cannot imagine," said Lady Algernon, as she looked from her window over one of the thousand canals which intersect Amsterdam, "why I am so excessively foolish as to remain in this country of fogs and ditches."

"I thought, my dear grandmamma, that it was on account of Mr. Thynne's intimacy with the Duke of Monmouth, and which, you remember, Mr. Locke said—"

"Do not trouble me, child, with the wise saws of that poor doctor. Until the man had the good fortune to travel with Joceline, I doubt if ever he had learned to make a bow."

"They say that he is a very wise and clever man."

"*They* say, child ! Whom do you mean by *they* ? I never heard the King or the Duke make that remark ; nor did I ever see anything so wonderful in his talent. He is awkward—very awkward ; and before he corrects others he had better improve himself and his politics."

"And, yet, I often wish I had been allowed to follow his advice, and to have deferred my first marriage."

"And why ?"

"Because I only changed my name from child to wife, remaining still the former."

"Had you not a husband who bore your name—the name of Percy ? Was that not sufficient ? You were too young to be his companion."

"Exactly, grandmamma, and therefore, as Mr. Locke said, I ought never to have been his wife."

"You have grown old enough, it appears, to sit in judgment upon my conduct, and such is improper in one so young. Surely, child, you had cakes and wine at your bridal—you were

dressed in the newest and most correct fashion, and your curtsey was universally admired. I pray God your remarks do not savour of ingratitude. What can a child require more than to be the envy and admiration of all?"

"I would much rather be admired for my modest character, my unassuming manner, and my talents, than excite envy from my dress."

"Or your beauty, child?"

"Grandmamma, I am old enough now to see that red hair cannot contribute to beauty."

"I vow some fat Hollander has bewitched the child! I would the post were arrived, and the spring far enough advanced to travel. The fogs of this country have bewildered your brains."

"It would need but little persuasion to make me travel, even in these raw days."

"And I dare say my cough and my age would be little respected?"

"Surely, Madam," said Lady Ogle, somewhat excited, "I have ever been obedient to your wishes, and obeyed your desires, when I could, had I felt so disposed, have followed the bent of my own inclination."

"My dear Lady Ogle!" said the Countess Algernon, with an affected sneer.

"My dear Lady Algernon!" replied the child, with a smile. The Countess made a most elegant curtsy, and her granddaughter did the same, then, bursting into a fit of laughter, she ran to kiss her grandmother.

"Not so, child—not so—that is a vulgar exhibition. In our station of life an embrace may be exchanged on New-year's day, but this violent and unseemly flow of supposed affection should be suppressed. Sit upright at the table, and let us to breakfast. You seem, child, to think your early marriage a misfortune—see what a blessing it has been to you. It has given you an opportunity of supporting your husband's loss with indifference, and has saved you from all the widow's tears and sighs, with which, in poetry, such losses are mourned."

"I could not with much sincerity mourn for the loss of a man, who, because he was called my husband, seemed entitled to some regard. I never saw him but eight times in my life, I should have cried more bitterly had the Swedish Count died."

“What! not forgotten that northern adventurer—that low butcher in a bull-fight—that hired desperado! I verily believe my daughter must have been insane when she introduced such a man at Petworth.”

“He was young, brave, handsome, beloved at court, and a favourite of the King.”

“Tut, child! our monarch is not nice of foreign acquaintances. Here is the post at last. Heaven be thanked! there is enough of letters to keep us employed reading and writing for the day. This is a strange hand—I know it not. Pray Heaven it be not from some in low life, who fatigues his readers with applications for charity. Ah!” she said, with a start, “it bears the signature of Monmouth—a large and bold hand, and yet too small for my old eyes. Read it to me, child, and be careful to remark the punctuation, for the sense is much changed by the stops. What can the Duke require of me?” asked the Countess, still holding the letter in her hand. “I pray it may not be for advice relative to politics—I grow too old to advise monarchs or dukes now. Read, child.”

“‘Madame.’”

“Remember, child,” interrupted the Dow-

ager, "that, to all persons of high rank, that beginning is proper and respectful, but should never be used to inferiors, excepting when they are about to suffer from your displeasure, and then the word should be without the final letter. Go on."

"I have no words to express my grief at the sad calamity which has occurred——'"

"Petworth is burnt, and my silk dresses destroyed!" ejaculated the Countess. "I shall bear it, I hope, with fortitude."

"And yet (continued the Lady Ogle) it becomes my duty, and I have only to implore your ladyship's forgiveness if I be too abrupt in my detail.'"

"I like the style. Elizabeth, give me my kerchief, that I may be prepared for my tears—and the strong scents. Now, child, go on, and I am in a position to bear the news."

"Last night, on returning from the Countess of Northumberland's, as he was alone in his carriage——'"

"What is this, child? Who was in his carriage? I like not this new style of putting the end of the sentence first, and leaving us in doubt (as in that barbarous German language)

of the meaning of the sentence, until the last word is pronounced."

"'Your granddaughter's husband, and my most particular friend, Mr. Thynne, was set upon by ruffians and murdered.'"

"Let the servants be put into decent mourning directly—wait until I give the orders."

Lady Ogle, however, soon ran over the rest of the letter, until she arrived at the last sentence, when she threw the paper on the table, saying—"It is false—it is false!"

"I hope not, my child," said Lady Algon, who was returning with her usual state and manner to her chair—"I have ordered the mourning; and I would not appear to do that which is unnecessary."

"He says that Count Konigsmark killed him, and I know—I feel—that it is false." Here the Lady Ogle went into violent hysterics. The servants were summoned, and not a maid was allowed to touch her, without something being placed to prevent the possibility of plebeian flesh coming in contact with such aristocratic skin. On her recovering, the first words she heard were, "There was not one inelegant attitude—the position was perfect."

It is not strange that this young girl, now a second time a widow at the age of fifteen, should be able to bear this news without any violent grief. Mr. Thynne, like Lord Ogle, had been a nominal husband. He had regarded his wife as a child, and had left her under the care of the grandmother. Her fortune had been his object; and he had scarcely ever exchanged with her, in all his life, four hours' conversation. It was evident that her hysterical fit had been produced from the accusation against Konigsmark, and she positively refused to read that part of the letter over again.

Lady Algernon was, however, somewhat lavish of her remarks upon the Swede, but soon was silent, as she had to turn her thoughts as to what was requisite to be done, in order to maintain a perfectly proper demeanour throughout this affair. Her under-toned remarks showed how anxious she was on this head. "The Duke of Monmouth will of course attend the funeral; and he will be buried in Westminster Abbey—money will effect that. These Hollanders are not much skilled in ladies dresses, and it were better to get those from France. We must not appear overcome by the

intelligence, but bear up firmly against such a calamity. It is vulgar to be murdered, although it sometimes extends to kings." Not once did the Countess betray the slightest grief. Her countenance had always been kept at school, and if she felt the smallest regret, she never betrayed half so much as in her apprehension lest her own silk dresses should have been destroyed.

Strange were the thoughts which crowded upon the poor widow's mind. There might have been some slight emotion that one who was called her husband had been so barbarously murdered, but the actual grief for the man himself was not likely to be deep, and in short was not so pretended, as will appear in the sequel; but her young heart felt strangely when Konigsmark's name had been mentioned. He had made an early impression upon her, and she was quick enough to perceive that, as the murder was committed in a carriage, it was not likely that a man who could find a thousand occasions to force a duel would descend to the mere assassin. Konigsmark must be in England, and therefore that country became a favourite with the widow. To hasten her de-

parture, she, with that little cunning excusable in the young, assumed a stately melancholy, and expressed a wish that she might be present at the funeral.

This was violently opposed by the Countess, who declared "that such things were never done; that proper people were hired to mourn; and that it was only amongst the lowest that any feeling was ever exhibited. "Do we not, child," she said, "hire musicians to blow into instruments, distorting their appearance and suffering from the exertion? and, likewise, do we not pay people to follow the dead, to wear crape, mimic sorrow, and bury the corpse? Consider how very unbecoming are red eyes, and how you must necessarily be amongst these people. Besides, it is against the law of fashion and proper society; and a lady might as well be expected to dance at an Irish wake, as to mourn at her husband's grave. It must not be."

CHAPTER XIII.

IN these times, of which we write, the post did not arrive exactly every day at breakfast-time. Colonel Palmer had not then been swindled by Mr. Pitt out of his fair and agreed average of profit upon mail coaches. Ships did not cross the Atlantic or the Channel, without sail or oar. Men were not transported at the rate of twenty-five miles an hour. Pavement was not made of wood. Vessels were not built of iron, and cities were not lighted by gas. Darwin had not then prophesied that, before long, steam would do the work of men, horses, sails, and oars.

The letters delivered at Amsterdam on one day might be followed by another batch the next day—it depended upon the vessels which

sailed, or the express courier sent ; and not unfrequently a despatch written five days after a previous one arrived first ; and such was the irregularity of the post—if post, according to our acceptance, it could be called—that men preferred travelling long distances, and talking over an affair, to hazarding a correspondence, which it was even betting never reached its destination.

The Lady Ogle, now again a widow, was no sooner known to be in the market of matrimony, than a hundred intrigues were set on foot to procure her hand. No one thought of applying to her personally, but Konigsmark. The rest of the army of adventurers applied directly or indirectly through Lady Algernon, the Countess of Northumberland, or Montague. The two last were always supposed to be accessible to a bribe ; the older and more stately Lady Algernon was above all want, and above all temptation ; her object was high birth, which, in the first instance, she had gained, and now, more resolutely than ever did she employ her time in spinning golden cobwebs to catch large flies.

“ I think,” said Lady Algernon to her grand-

daughter, "that your husband's death was the most fortunate event of your life. He really was nobody—positively nobody—and your fortune helped him to the society of that wretched Duke of Monmouth; it is enough that *he* is the idol of the people, to show how low must be his manners. Well, my dear child, your husband is dead, God give rest to his soul! He was vulgarly murdered; but there is one comfort in this—he was not rolled in the kennel, or trampled under foot by ruffians, but was attacked, as a gentleman should be, in his carriage, with his own servants to attend to his wounds. So far this was fortunate, because we will have it so engraven on his tomb. But, after all is done, which of course we will do, it can only be the tomb of Mr. Thynne,* or of Thomas Thynne, Esq. Now, we must really manage, in your next marriage, to obli-

* Thynne was buried at the west end of the south aisle of Westminster Abbey, under a marble monument. On the base is to be seen the representation of the murder, with a short inscription in English, recording the fact. A much longer inscription in Latin, and which hinted at the guilt of Konigsmark and the influences to which he owed his escape, was intended to have been engraven on the stone, but Bishop Spratt—"small, servile Spratt"—would not suffer it.

terate the plebeian name of Thynne, in the blaze of some ducal coronet. I have one which I think will fit your forehead."

"I think, my dear grandmamma——"

"Stop, child. I think it would be better if, for the future, you left off terms of endearment, which are more common amongst the lower classes than with us. Call me the Lady Algernon for the future. A girl twice a widow cannot be thought a child."

"Then I hope, Madame, you will cease to continue me as such."

"Lady Ogle—Lady Ogle, is this gratitude? Have you not female servants at your discretion? Do I allow you to do one useful thing, such as knitting, which a fruitless attempt was once made to bring into fashion? If your fan falls, are you required to stoop to recover it? Have you not a secretary to write your letters, and a person hired to read aloud to you? If you wish for music, you have only to order it—carriages await your inclination; and I verily believe that, since I first had you under my protection and tuition, I can safely aver you have never done one single thing for yourself, but eat, drink, and sleep; and, if it were

possible to avoid those things, for all common people do them, no expense should have been spared to accomplish it."

Lady Ogle could not help smiling, for she never had been allowed to laugh, and very often endeavoured to control her tears. "Lady Algernon," she said, with some gravity, "it is this dependence upon others that I would avoid; it is because I am not allowed to do anything that I am miserable."

"Good gracious, child!" interrupted Lady Algernon, "who, in his or her senses, ever desired to work to become happy? I am sure you never learnt that in any of Dryden's poems, which I desired your dependent to read aloud."

"It is, Madame, nevertheless a great source of uneasiness to me, and I find every day the truth of that which Mr. Locke recommended—the good use of time, the pleasure of being independent of every one, the certainty that no hour will linger too long, but that a general resource should be found in books and proper occupation."

"Mr. Locke, Lady Ogle, was only admitted into the houses of proper people, because he

was supposed to have some medical skill ; and, like one of his own disgusting leeches, having once fixed himself, there he remained. Heaven help your bewildered brain ! Of what use are dependents, if we do anything for ourselves ? In Sicily, I am told, even men never walk. I once heard Lord Joceline say, that the Romans used to lie on sofas and be fed ; and it is well known, even to this day, that when Queen Elizabeth—(ah ! she was one we all should follow, for she had a new dress for every day of the year)—sent a pair of silk stockings to the sovereign lady of Spain, as a present, the Ambassador replied, ‘ I would have you to know, Queens of Spain have no legs.’ There, Madame, that is the result of pre-eminence of birth, and is thus marked to show that others should work for us. Pray sit upright, and do not bend as if you carried a vulgar load upon your back. Let us talk of your next husband.”

“ I pray you excuse me, good Lady Algeron, for we shall never agree on this subject.”

“ I hope, Lady Ogle, we should never differ ; your proper respect to my age will, I am sure, prevent such incivility.”

"I am told the Countess of Sussex often differs with the Duchess of Cleveland, her mother."

"I crave your mercy, good Lady Ogle; spare my ears that wretched creature's name—she was of no birth; married a man who was called Palmer; committed adultery with the King, which was an honour for so low a creature; and was made a Duchess, in order that she might live abroad, and be received in some kind of society; besides, the Countess of Sussex is older than yourself."

"One year, Madam."

"One year at your time of life is important." Here Lady Algernon rang a small bell, and instantly two or three servants appeared.—"Go, one of you varlets, and bid Lady Ogle's servant to come and pick up her kerchief, which has fallen."*

Lady Ogle broke through all previous orders,

* I was once sitting with a Creole young lady, at Jamaica, who dropped a ball of cotton. The mother rang a small table bell, and a negro came in. He received these orders:—"Tell Charlotte to tell Lucy to tell Caroline to tell Nancy to come here and pick up missie's ball of cotton." That was high life in the Colonies.

and dared to do it herself. Lady Algernon rose in a dignified manner, and left the room. The charm was broken—the heiress of all the Percies had stooped to pick up what she had carelessly let fall ; from that moment, her life began to change ; young as she was, she saw she had ventured across the Rubicon, and was resolved to have somewhat of her own way for the future.

The long suspense which was inevitable in those times between each communication was borne by Lady Ogle with proportionate patience. Day after day came and went, until the 26th of February arrived, when an English newspaper, which contained the description already given of Konigsmark, and the reward for his apprehension, fell under the notice of Lady Algernon. It was read to her by a lady in poor circumstances—retained expressly to read and to write for Lady Ogle. Latterly, Lady Algernon had become more distant with Lady Ogle, and she saw with horror that now, her young charge, from a trifling beginning, had ventured to do all and everything for herself, she even wrote her own letters, and thus Lady Algernon was unable

to arrive at their purpose, which formerly, through the amanuensis, she contrived to learn.

"Bid the Lady Ogle to come to me. Leave that paper." "Lady Ogle," the Countess began, with great gravity, "I have observed of late, that all my desire to make you in strict respect observant of our customs has failed, and since now you no longer use the eyes of others, perhaps you will kindly oblige me by reading some parts of that newspaper, just sent me by our Ambassador."

"Most willingly, my dear grandmamma; it will delight me, and I hope prove a pleasure to you; it is so delightful to be alone with you, when no third person can interrupt us."

"It may be vastly delightful, Lady Ogle, but by no means fashionable. Read, child."

The quick eyes of Lady Ogle fell instantly on the name of Konigsmark, and, having begun the paragraph, she was obliged to continue it, and with hurried expression, she read the description of her admirer, and the proffered reward for his discovery, he being clearly suspected of the murder. The paper fell from her hands, and a sudden paleness overspread

her face ; the Countess observed it, and summoned her servant, bidding her bring some strong scents, and remarking, “ that this was a proof how erroneous it was that people of high birth could be left by themselves, without incurring some danger.” On Lady Ogle’s recovering, she immediately left the room, and in the solitude of her own chamber poured out her soul in grief. That she loved Konigsmark, she felt assured—be it right or wrong, she loved him—the general daring of his character, his kind behaviour, his soft, winning voice, his vast talent in music and languages, his quickness of wit, and his tender attention and regard, had endeared him to her. Her mind revolted against the charge now brought against him ; and, if true, she saw in it a devotion to herself ; but one so ardent, so young, and so loving could not entertain the charge for an instant : still it sapped her health, her cheek became pale, her eye sunken, and there was no appetite to restore waning nature. She dispatched servants in every direction for newspapers ; every ship from England was visited, and news, either real or manufactured, was bought. But although,

about the 5th of March, she learnt that the trial had begun on the 27th of February, and that Konigsmark, with his servant, ay, and with the men he had met in Norway—for she remembered faithfully the anecdote of the witches—were indicted for the murder of her husband, she still discredited the affair. Love is ever blind, and in her own mind she gave herself a thousand reasons why Konigsmark should demand a trial; it was, she thought, his high chivalrous notion, which disdained concealment, and which came forward to vindicate himself from the charge levelled against one of his household.

It was not until the 17th of March that the intelligence reached her of the result of the trial, and that through a letter from Paris to her mother. The same courier—for Montague, at the instance of Brett, had dispatched a person with the letters—brought a dispatch from the Ambassador to Lady Algernon.

The Ambassador's letter ran thus:—"Madame"—(Lady Algernon never allowed any familiarity of address, even from her nearest relation, and when her husband was alive, she always addressed him in her correspondence

as My Lord,)—" I presume you are aware of the fate of your granddaughter's husband, whose name will now be lost for ever. I am aware how strenuously your ladyship opposed this match, upon the legitimate grounds of inequality of birth ; the fate, therefore, of this man (it is to be remarked that Montague diplomatically avoids the mention of the name,) is not to be deplored ; and I hope your ladyship will not much grieve over your granddaughter's bereavement. It is now many years since your ladyship honoured Paris with a visit ; perhaps, at this present moment, I could entice you to return. His Majesty the Grand Monarque makes constant inquiries of your health, and desires much again to see your ladyship. The Countess of Northumberland has written a note to Lady Ogle to give her all information regarding the late trial in England, and also solicits her company to pass the spring in Paris ; but, of course, on this head, she, as well as myself, would be guided by your opinion and wish. Knowing how well disposed your ladyship has ever been to forward the pleasure of your granddaughter, and how much the latter has benefited from your advice and instruction,

I have sent a special courier to your ladyship with this dispatch, who will await your leisure, and bring back your answer. I have the honour to be, Madame, &c., &c."

"A wise ambassador," said Lady Algernon, when she had finished; "one who knows well the usages of the world. Let the courier be cared for, and amply provided with all that is necessary." Scarcely had she released herself from the society of the servant, when Lady Ogle came dancing into the room, her cheek flushed, her eyes bright, and with every demonstration of joy.

"Lady Ogle! Lady Ogle!" said the Countess, as she raised her hands, "what a very inelegant position! I have heard that dancing girls, publicly hired, distort themselves in attitudes; but for the last of the Percies to throw her arms fantastically about—it's quite shocking—very shocking!"

"My dear grandmamma, excuse my inelegances, and allow me to be natural for once. My mother has written me the kindest letter, urging me to come to Paris, and pass the requisite time of my grief with her. Surely, my dear Lady Algernon, you cannot refuse a request which I make so earnestly. I have

never been in France, and, independent of the great joy I shall experience in seeing Paris, I shall see also my mother, from whom I have been so long separated."

"Pray be seated, Lady Ogle," said the starch Countess; "whatever is done in a hurry, is generally done badly. Let us discourse upon the matter. Montague has written a letter in which he mentions the frequent inquiries of Louis XIV. concerning my health, and his wish again to see me at his court. I cannot well refuse the monarch's desire, but a thing of such grave consequence must not be hastily done. Moreover, I would remain here until I receive intelligence of the proper respect having been paid to your husband as the husband of a Percy, and of the execution of that abominable Swede."

"My letter, Lady Algernon, is complete in that respect. Mr. Thynne——"

"I crave your mercy, good Lady Ogle; say, 'my late husband,' and let his name be buried with his body."

"Well, grandmamma, he is buried; the Duke of Monmouth and many of the nobility attended. His body was embalmed and ex-

hibited in state, and everything was done to honour——”

“The husband of the last of the Percies!” interrupted Lady Algernon. “And what of that foreign Count?”

“Oh, grandmamma, acquitted, of course; and the murderers hung. The King was pleased to say that there was no ground of suspicion against him. I knew—I felt—one of his high lineage would never descend to the low connivance and cowardly assault, which ended in murder. But say, good grandmamma, are we to accept the Ambassador’s invitation?”

“The invitation, child, of the Countess of Northumberland would be a more accurate expression. I will ponder upon it. At present, I think I see no reasonable objection. But let me implore you to walk slowly and with becoming bearing, such as is customary with ladies of your high lineage and descent.”

No sooner was Lady Ogle relieved from the domestic tyranny, than again she read over her mother’s letter. It was rare for her to receive any communication from her parent, from whom she had been so long separated; but still the name of mother retained its endearment on

her mind ; and, although schooled in every art and every grace with vigilant tyranny, the heart of Lady Ogle still beat with affection for her parent, and still retained the liveliest recollection and love for all the kindness she had received. Her letter ran thus :—

“ MY DEAR DAUGHTER,—The sad account of your husband’s barbarous murder filled us with sorrow—you are really, child, very unfortunate; but you are with her who will teach you to bear any loss with becoming grace and fortitude. We think it would dissipate your grief if you were thrown into the society of people cheerful and lively ; and we therefore have invited Count Konigsmark—with whose acquittal of all participation in the foul act you have of course been made acquainted—to pass some time with us. Poor man ! to show his wish that those who injured you should meet their proper fate, he assisted at the trial, and he was present at the execution ; and it was through his interposition that the body was embalmed,—(so little did the Countess of Northumberland know of the affair, that she had confounded the embalming of Vratz, of which we have already spoken, with that of Mr. Thynne,)—and left in state for the public to ap-

proach. The King invited the Count to court directly after the acquittal ; but Konigsmark, having accepted the command of a French regiment of horse, (and he looks very handsome in his uniform,) preferred leaving a country in which any one could suspect his honour and his loyalty. The Carnival is now at its height, and you would be much amused at its drollery. I have put all my servants in becoming mourning, and we have closed the embassy, for the public eye must be respected, and we must do all in accordance to the custom on such occasions ; but there is no occasion for grief, when we are released from such surveillance. My husband has written such a letter to Lady Algernon as will induce her instantly to leave Amsterdam. He knows her weak points, and has assailed them. Pray be careful she does not read this ; and if she wavers about departure, speak of the King and the court. Konigsmark desires his respects to you ; he is quite aware that you never could have suspected any participation on his part in the foul transaction. I shall expect you as soon as possible. Until I see you, dearest girl, believe me, your affectionate mother.—Paris, 4th March, 1682.”

CHAPTER XIV.

KONIGSMARK, on his return to Paris, was received as usual at Versailles and the Tuileries. The domestic news which agitated England, in regard to the murder, was little cared about on the Continent. Newspapers were not then daily exchanged, and France was more occupied with the intrigues of her own court than the occasional murder of some English gentleman.

Brett undertook the delicate task of again offering the rich heiress's hand to the Swede for a due and proper consideration; and, strange as such things may appear in the present day, the sale of Lady Ogle is a matter of history, and beyond contradiction. Who, in these days, would believe that Members of the English House of Commons, and even the King himself, received pensions, regularly paid by the French Ambassador in London, and that, when such pensions

were in arrear, the vagabonds who received them publicly exclaimed against the delay? We have it on the authority of Dalrymple, that, for one million livres, Charles himself said to Barillon, the French minister, that it would be the sure way “de mettre pour toute sa vie l’Angleterre dans sa dependance.” If kings could sell their countries, it was natural enough for parents to sell their children; and do we not find amongst those *patriots* who received five hundred guineas by the hands of the French Ambassador—by the order of Louis le Grand—the name of Algernon Sidney?—and, worse than he, figures Hampden, the grandson of the great patriot, and then in Parliament, for a similar sum!

Montague’s idol through life was money, and Brett was a worthy coadjutor and partner. We have before given a proof that the Countess of Northumberland was not firm against the golden allurements. In those days, profligacy was a password to honours, and bribery and corruption were an introduction to the court.

Brett was not likely to offer poor Lady Ogle for a small sum, and he well knew how to manage this business.

Konigsmark’s position was precarious—for scandal has a thousand tongues, and ill deeds fly over the face of the earth. He might meet the cold look of disdain, and know the cause; and

when saluted by smiles or respect, it must be attributed to ignorance of past events. Eager to be entrapped, and with the vision ever before him of the star of his destiny, still superstitious, he closed with Brett's offer, and at once agreed to pay the sum of thirty thousand pounds to Montague—such sum, it being understood, was to be kept apart and free from all settlements. A paper, acknowledging himself the debtor to this amount, and bearing on it the agreement that the sum was not to be demanded until one month after his marriage, was signed, and Konigsmark was admitted to the family dinners at the embassy—the house being closed against all others, and even the presence of the Count kept as far as possible a secret.

Konigsmark, believing himself in security, not only from the attacks of malicious tongues but from future poverty, was eager to leave Paris immediately, in order to conduct his future bride to that capital; but it was argued and agreed that it were better for him to remain until the return of Montague's courier than to hazard passing him on the road; and this was finally agreed upon.

The Duchess of Cleveland, after her last meeting with Montague, knowing that her letter would almost to a certainty arrive at its proper destination, felt all the inward satisfaction of glutted

revenge. Supplanted by her own child!—gulled and deceived by the very man to whom she had confided all her wishes!—sneered at and despised by the Countess of Northumberland!—she looked forward with impatience to the moment when she might stand boldly forth and say—"I did this; I have hurled you from your proud situation; my influence with the monarch is yet powerful, and yours is gone for ever." Few men can endure ridicule. No man was more sensitive than Charles II.

As the carriage drew up at her door, an observant eye might have detected that her step was firmer, her head more exalted, her cheek more glowing, her lip more satirical. It was but for a moment. Her daughter's figure passed into the salon, and the mother's face became instantly blanched. She retired to her room, laid aside her out-door dress, and, with a heart quickly beating, and, with a faltering tongue, she desired that the Countess of Sussex might be sent to her.

The young Countess, scarcely yet so initiated in vice and cunning, felt a warning thrill, a sickening sensation, as her mother's servant delivered the message; and, when she answered, "You will tell my mother I shall instantly obey her summons," she felt almost choked with the utterance.

The Duchess of Cleveland had resolved upon the salon for this dreadful interview; and she

had endeavoured, by means of some exciting drops, to rouse her spirit for the painful scene. Having seated herself in the exact position which she occupied when Brett paid his visit, she held her hands firmly against her heart, for it seemed bursting with its fluttering palpitation, and increased in fulness and rapidity as the handle of the door turned, and her daughter entered the room.

The Countess of Sussex, at that time not sixteen, was of sufficient beauty to attract much notice and attention. Her hair was jet black, but of a surprising luxuriance; her eyes were large and soft, swimming apparently in moisture; her nose was very slightly *retroussé*, but her mouth made ample amends for this slight defect—it was small, with the most fascinating smile, which seemed never to abandon it; and over her delightful countenance there was always the laughing of a playful disposition. Her temper was above all praise—it defied irritability; and never was there seen a girl with a more innocent, more childish, more fascinating countenance—"fronti nulla fides" we are told. This natural innocence had yielded to the persevering Montague, and added another to the long list of his victims.

The fear—for the guilty are always fearful—blanched her countenance as she entered the

room. The smile, the natural smile, forsook her lips, and there was a quick, tremulous motion, which betrayed her inquietude of mind. She saw her mother's stern countenance—she surmised the cause of the interview—and she felt convinced that the early drive in the carriage, and the late return, had not been made without some event which had caused this summons. Neither spoke. Guilt held fast the tongue of the one; remorse, fear, shame, jealousy, and anger sealed the lips of the other. With a slow and unsteady step, the Countess moved towards a fauteuil, to which, with a trembling hand, the Duchess pointed. There was a stillness, which would have awed innocence, in the room; and some minutes elapsed before a deep sigh from the mother disturbed the silence. At length she spoke, and only in these words—"My daughter!" when a shudder overcame her, and her child rushed into her arms, saying—"Yes, yes, dearest mother, ever—ever your daughter!" The first difficulty was overcome; both had found words; and now the deep, wounded feelings of the heart began to find vent. With a silent resolution, the Duchess unwound the arms of the daughter, and, pointing to the chair, desired her to be seated.

"The first pang of this dreadful meeting," began the Duchess, "is, Heaven be thanked, overcome, and I can now proceed to my duty."

“What can this mean?” said the Countess. “Let me pray you, good mamma, at once to relieve my mind.”

“I have first to accuse myself, and to heap upon my own head all the ashes of this sorrowful day. I have often read of the benefit of example to the child in the behaviour of the parent, and I could scarcely hope the innocent would escape when the mother was guilty. But we must part—and part for ever! and before that last sad farewell, I would so far reconcile you with yourself, as to place your guilt to my neglect.” The Countess of Sussex here attempted to speak, but her mother motioned her to silence. “Speak not until I have done—attempt not by any subterfuge, or by any art, now well known to both of us, to add either hypocrisy or falsehood to your crime. Make me not curse you, when, at the last moment, I would still bless you!”

“My mother—my mother!” ejaculated the Countess, “for the love of Heaven, curse not your poor child!”

“Child!—ah, no longer my child; but a being whom as a mother I should love, and whom as a woman I must hate. Child!—ah! what a pang it costs to tear that beloved name from my memory. Firstly, then—for I must do this painful duty—I accuse you of dishonouring your name and lineage with the Ambassador.”

“ Ah !”

“ This note, directed to you, was placed by Colonel Brett in that portfolio ; seated where I am now, that glass betrayed every look and every action. You saw the note dropped, and I also. I possessed myself of it—read it.”

The Countess, who had burst into tears, waved with her hand a negative.

“ Then I will read it to you, for it is necessary you should know how sure I am of your guilt, and the steps I have taken to be revenged. Start not ! if my revenge was in murder, I should make myself my own victim—now, all that first agitated me with a mother’s love is past, and all the devil of a jealous woman is uppermost. Listen !” Here she read, with a marked emphasis, every word slowly and distinctly ; whilst the Countess, doomed to undergo the torture, and learning from the note the cause of Montague’s distant behaviour, and also his declaration of his undying affection, the blood forsook her cheeks, and she fell back in the chair, as pale as snow. For a moment the Duchess stopped ; then resuming her task until the last word, she carefully folded the note, and concealed it in her dress—“ Now hear the rest. The letter I sent to the King, your lover withheld. This day, I dispatched a courier to his Majesty.”

“ My father !” shrieked the Countess.

"I must bear that reproach, for that false Ambassador, I know, betrayed the secret, and, to gain my daughter, used it as an excuse for her fall. I told you that all the reproach was due to me; heap it again and again upon me—crush me with that infamy—hate me! spurn me! despise me!"

"My mother! oh, my mother!" said the Countess, as she threw herself at her parent's feet, "spare me these cruel words; never shall the secret pass my lips."

"Raise yourself, child; this is no time for weakness in either of us; the secret was only worth keeping lest you should know it. The child aware of the parent's infamy, dissolves half the ties of nature, the other half has snapped from jealousy."

"I do not understand you!"

"But you shall before we part. It is my duty not to screen myself—and fearlessly I tell you, that the woman who yields to a King is as culpable as those who debase themselves to meaner people. Your rank and my own are the results of my wickedness, and well shall we both reap in sorrow what was sown in crime. It is to stop you in your career, lest one born of you should live to curse you, as you will yet curse me."

"Never—never, while I live, shall such a word pass my lips. . . . I feel ashamed to meet your

glance—I tremble in your presence—and in all you excuse me to accuse yourself.”

“This is the painful duty which devolves upon me, since you have become informed of your birth; but if your father has yet one spark of feeling in his heart, how will he bear the tidings of his daughter’s dishonour! For some time this has been whispered in Paris, until it has grown into murmurs loud and intelligible. How long do you imagine the rendezvous could be kept without the remarks of your servants?—when three know a secret, who is safe? Even the old woman, paid not to look, could not altogether avert her eyes—the young Countess of Sussex would be traced to the door, the bubble would burst, and the reputation would be lost. You love him?—speak!”

“I confess I love him.”

“I will not ask you to confess what this note too plainly indicates.”

The Countess held down her head, and her tears dropped on the carpet.

“Poor, dear child! so early led astray—so soon following in the path I fain would have obstructed. I, who have committed the same error, dare not rebuke you, and cannot point the finger of scorn, for that must be pure, to be repulsive; but I have still authority, and will use it.

“Now, child, on your knees promise me

never again to allow Mr. Montague's approach—never to write, or in any manner hold intercourse with him, but to spurn him from you." The Countess remained silent. "Do you wish me to bare my heart, and show what must be your feelings hereafter? I call upon you to renounce him. What! still silent!—still, after what I have said, so fascinated by this serpent, that no words of mine can shake the ascendancy he has obtained over your affections! Then I will do a mother's last duty, whatever may be the shame in the avowal. Read that!" and the Duchess handed her daughter a letter.

"My eyes so swim in tears, dear mother, that I cannot see a letter! Read it to me."

"That I could never do—neither could I hear you read it aloud. Dry your tears, and make your eyes save your heart, your honour, your reputation, and mayhap your life."

Urged by this unusual appeal, the Countess took the letter. No sooner did she perceive it was Montague's hand-writing, than her eye-balls seemed to blaze with heat, and the tears were dried—it was to her mother. Oh! fatal discovery! Her heart beat fearfully; nor did she heed the deep sobs of her parent, who now had covered her face with her hands, and wept in all the sincerity of sorrow. The Countess could scarcely hold the paper—her trembling increased

as she proceeded—her eager eyes seemed to run forward before the mind could receive the impression of the sense, until, at the conclusion, she gave one loud, piercing shriek, and fell prostrate on the floor. The dreadful truth had been revealed!—she was the rival, the supplanter of her own mother! That blow had overcome all fortitude—all affection; and she, unable to bear this dreadful discovery, swooned upon the floor.

At this moment, the huge folding-doors were thrown open, and the servant announced “l’Ambassadeur d’Angleterre.” The Duchess instantly recovered herself, and, advancing from the sofa, stood at the feet of her daughter. The doors were closed, and Montague, guided by the blaze of the fire—for there was no other light in the room—directed his advance by the flame; and seeing the tall figure of the Duchess, began a set speech.

“Look here, sir,” interrupted the Duchess; “behold your work!—there is my daughter at my feet.”

“Dead!” said Montague, as he recoiled a step. “Who has done this deed?”

“You!—your letter to me of the day before yesterday. I would rather she died at my feet, than recovered to be aware of our infamy. Leave my house this instant, for I could not trust my-

self in your presence ; but a fearful vengeance is prepared for you !—you, who have violated every promise made to your king and to myself !—Look, I say, at your work !”

Montague, somewhat surprised, soon recovered from his astonishment ; and, kneeling down by the side of the Countess, placed his hand upon her forehead. “ She has fainted—that is all. If she is laid flat on her back, and her forehead chafed, she will soon recover. You had better aid her, or summon your servant.”

The cool manner in which this was pronounced seemed to convert the Duchess into a statue. Montague came prepared for a scene, and half suspected this had been previously arranged. His visit was to lull the mother—for he felt convinced that one quarter of an hour’s conversation would effect this.

“ Must I be still cursed with your presence, and has a woman no protection from insult ?” said the Duchess. “ Then I must hazard publicity, rather than she should recover to see you.” She rang a small bell instantly ; the large doors were opened. “ The Ambassador’s carriage,” said the Duchess, in a stately voice. “ And bid the Countess’s maid to come instantly !” She bowed to his Excellency, with all the coolness of an accustomed courtier, who smiles whilst his heart is breaking, and the Ambassador was literally forced from the room.

"Au revoir!" said Montague, with nonchalance—"à demain!"

No sooner was he gone, than every assistance was rendered to the Countess. The whole scene had not occupied two minutes, nor had Montague missed the only opportunity afforded him; as he knelt down to the Countess, he contrived to slip a small note into her dress. On the Countess's removal to her room, it was requisite to place her in bed: the mother, recollecting that Montague's letter had fallen on the floor when her daughter fainted, ran to re-possess herself of it; whilst the maid, who aided her young mistress in this horrid intrigue, drew the Ambassador's note from its hiding-place, and concealed it in a small box.

"Your page, madam," said the servant, "wishes to see you."

"Bid him come instantly, and shut the door. Well, sir," she inquired, "have you done the duty required of you?"

"I have, my lady. The man was charged to deliver a letter from the Duchess into the King's hand. He rode for his life, nor would he tell me more."

"Go! he has told enough to confirm all my worst fears and apprehensions," and bursting into a flood of tears, she added, "and I am prepared to die."

CHAPTER XV.

MONTAGUE, alarmed at the first discovery, soon regained his usual serenity. "She will never dare speak of it," he argued to himself. "The King would be more incensed against her than ever; besides, I have her own letters, in which she has committed herself to the utmost. What is she to gain by giving publicity to this event? Nothing, absolutely nothing, but revenge; and there, I own, I feel alarmed. No hungry tiger will face greater perils for its food, than will a woman to gratify revenge. I can soothe the King. This is a summer cloud, which will soon pass away. The Duchess cannot continue in Paris without my protection and surveillance; and when this hasty gloom is dissipated, the sunshine of apparent kindness will somewhat restore us." Brett was made a participator in the circumstance, and he, following the custom of that loose

age, regarded the whole affair as a most desirable conquest, and felicitated his worthy master on his success. "It was hardly worth a serious consideration; for how can the Duchess implicate you with the King, without betraying herself?"

"Oh! my dear Brett," said the Ambassador, with familiarity, "if a woman once determines to gain a point, she will not be nice about the means she employs. This Duchess is a real virago."

"Your Excellency is a match for all the viragoes in existence; and I feel convinced you will withdraw yourself from one of these intrigues with consummate prudence and skill. I have been thinking that it would be well if your Excellency were to accompany Count Konigsmark to the court. It will at once show that no suspicions were ever entertained against him, and that it was so considered by his Majesty of England, who took a lively interest in this affair. This will better account for his being patronised by you now; for, after all is considered, it seems curious to entertain a man at the embassy who was placed at the bar as the murderer of the Ambassador's son-in-law."

"Talk of the wisdom of Locke!" ejaculated Montague—"Brett, my worthy friend, your equal in resources does not exist. He shall go with me this evening. I presume the Duchess will

not venture to the court, and the Countess will, for a time, weep over the discovery. By my faith, Brett, that woman must have had the glasses arranged in her salon purposely to mark every action which occurred; and yet, I will wager my head, she never saw me place the note in her daughter's dress. Thirty thousand pounds, Brett—a good round sum, and worth a little risk. I will take Konigsmark to the court to-night."

Konigsmark had been received well by the Countess of Northumberland, and, although he did not live entirely at the embassy, had the entrée, which was at this moment denied to everybody else. He cheerfully obeyed the summons of Montague, and that evening went to Versailles. On his former visits, it has been mentioned that the Count was well introduced, and had received attention from his Majesty. He now went dressed as a colonel of cavalry, and as a French subject.

The news of the murder had scarcely attracted notice at that gay scene of dissipation and vice. Men in those days disappeared suddenly, and curiosity seldom ferreted out the reason. Some remarked that the Swede was a bold man for the attempt; others hinted that the circumstance would make a decent tragedy; and all expressed a wish to see the man who hatched the plot. It never occurred to any of the higher classes to

exclude Konigsmark from society, or to brand him as a murderer. The court had acquitted him; Thynne's own monarch had expressed himself gratified at the acquittal, and no translator had thought the subject either sufficiently new or exciting to translate into the French papers all the nice points of the English trial. Louis XIV. received him well; he was complimented on his personal appearance by the ladies; and his fame for desperate actions in all countries made him a kind of lion even in Paris.

"See!" said one old French gentleman to a fat Abbé, "that is the Swede who murdered the husband, in order to wed the widow."

"Ah, *farceur!*" replied the Abbé, and walked on.

In the course of the evening, his Majesty himself condescended to make some remark to Konigsmark, which afterwards grew into a more interesting conversation. His Majesty spoke of the dispatch which Konigsmark had taken from Malta to Alexandria two years previously, and complimented him upon the execution of a service much more hazardous than the Count had believed when he undertook it; after which, his Majesty remarked—"I have a service of the same kind for you to perform, in three or four days; and you might," continued the King, with an affable smile, "make

a slight detour on your return, and visit Amsterdam."

Konigsmark made no answer, but bowed lowly.

"You will hear of this again," continued the King; "and perhaps you had better apprise the English Ambassador of it."

Montague, in the mean time, was playing the man of fashion and of the world to some of the ladies who thronged to the court. All knew of his kind protection of the Duchess, and many suspected the intrigue with the Countess; but Montague was a man who enjoyed bantering with a woman's fame; and with his ceaseless wit and careless levity he beguiled many a moment. In vain the brilliant women of the court attacked him; he turned aside their poisoned arrows, or retorted them on the unhappy archers, apparently without malignity, but always with a double meaning. Montague was a wonderful favourite with the ladies, and he knew how to maintain the supremacy he had acquired.

"The King," said Konigsmark, "has desired me to be in readiness to take a dispatch to the Princess ——."

"What can this mean?" said Montague.
"When are you to go?"

"In a few days."

"Then it is of small import, and may serve our turn. Should the Lady Ogle not have left

Amsterdam, you can enforce our request of her society in person."

"So the King appears to think," replied the Count, "for he gave a hint as to that."

"Ah!" ejaculated Montague; and then he murmured to himself, "Treason in the camp; the Duchess suspects this, and has laid the train. What's in the wind now, I wonder!"

"It will not, I trust, interfere with our arrangements."

"Not in the least; in fact, the King seems, by placing you near her, to forward our views; the sooner this takes place the better; and it will seem more lover-like to go to the lady, than to allow the lady to come to you. Have you ever read Richard the Third, as written by Shakespeare?"

"Never!" replied the Swede. "My time has been employed in wars, and I have never had leisure to read anything but books of witchcraft."

"You might get a hint from that play—yours is a somewhat similar case to the Duke of Gloucester's, and he succeeded." (Here Montague, who evidently had been thinking aloud, became aware of his absence of mind, and turned the conversation on the beauty of Lady Ogle.) "I presume, Count, you do not much value the colour of the hair in your wife?"

"Not a stiver!" replied the Count.

"Nor the complexion of the cheeks, nor the elegance of the form?"

"I never quarrel with Nature about Nature's works."

"You deserve to be the richest man in Europe. Never quarrel about trifles—a woman's beauty is good as an attractive power, but after marriage ceases to be essential. Temper is more desirable than appearance, and a woman strictly brought up in the ways of religion and modesty is inestimable."

Konigsmark, who knew Montague well, imagined that he had gone mad, or was about to practise some diplomatic art upon him; but he was mistaken: Montague was delivering himself of all the virtue he possessed in the few words he uttered.

"You will let me know the instant that his Majesty desires your attendance, for it would be well for you to go with letters from the Countess and myself; this will be an excuse for your visit which one so fertile in the art of love will not fail to turn to advantage."

"I shall take care to inform you of the time; and many thanks for your kindness."

"They are not needed. We shall, I presume, see you to-morrow at the usual time?"

"I shall be punctual. Good night!"

The carriage stopped at the English embassy.

and Konigsmark had taken his departure, when he was somewhat attracted by the suspected surveillance of a page, who was evidently hovering about the embassy, and who gained admittance before Konigsmark had withdrawn far from the house. It was late, and the circumstance, however trivial, excited in him a desire to know the reason of this great caution in entering a house generally accessible to all; and he loitered about near a distant corner, but still close enough to remark any one who came out of the house.

The moon was up, and the night had the genial warmth of a Paris spring; besides, the Swede had no affair on hand—nothing desperately exciting—and he preferred seeking some adventure in preference to retiring quietly to bed. But few were in the streets, and these passed rapidly; the shops were closed, and the busy hum of men entirely subsided.

Not long did Konigsmark remain, nor was he slow to discover Montague, who, preceded by the page, took a direction contrary to that where the Count was stationed.

Konigsmark felt somewhat ashamed of enacting the spy: the man who concocted a murder, and waited to see its quiet execution, still knew that peeping and prying was dishonourable, and what was more, felt it; he nevertheless resolved to ascertain for what cause his Majesty's minister perilled

his precious life in the dark dull streets of Paris, when the rest of the world had retired to rest.

Montague was wrapped in a large cloak, and proceeded nimbly on his course; the Count followed at a considerable distance. Having passed the bridge, the page and the Ambassador gained the Rue St. Honoré, and arrived at the hotel of the Duchess of Cleveland. Konigsmark, on seeing them enter, laughed within himself at his folly, for Montague's protection of the Duchess was as well known in Paris as any of the numerous court intrigues; but yet this was an unusual affair, and there was some mystery in this midnight visit. Had his Excellency not returned home, there would have been little beyond his general practice.

A vague kind of apprehension came over the mind of Konigsmark, and this, with his usual command of heart, he threw off; but since Thynne's death, he had never felt himself the man of iron nerve he was before; there was blood upon his hands, and not that shed in honourable war, where men are licensed murderers and spoliators, and where the more killed, the greater the heroes. Oh! folly beyond imaginable folly, wherein, for the caprice of a monarch or the whirlwind of popular momentary excitement, thousands upon thousands are slaughtered, inveterate hatred engendered, millions expended, and millions impoverished—all to be consoled

by the word "peace"—and all to suffer, for years and years to come, under the awful fiat of taxation !

Not long had Konigsmark to wait : a shriek was heard ; the small door of the heavy *porte cochère* opened, and Montague sped with the activity of a harlequin ; a female voice was heard shouting "*à la garde!*" and "*au secours!*" which sounded loudly in the stillness of the night.

In an instant, lights were seen at the different windows, and Konigsmark, well aware that the city was patrolled by troops of soldiers, and that an escape for his Excellency was doubtful, immediately resolved to hazard his own liberty, in order to preserve that of his friend. He followed the minister with the speed of youth, and scarcely had they gained the bridge and crossed it, than they were aware that the hounds were on the track ; voices were heard calling aloud to stop the fugitives. At this time, Konigsmark had come close to Montague, who, believing himself captured, for he could run but little then, prepared to announce his rank.

"Turn to the left, or take the Rue de Lisle," said Konigsmark. "I will be the hare for these booted and heavy laden soldiers to hunt."

Montague took the hint ; he was a man who would allow any one to be sacrificed for him ; he therefore shrunk behind the projection of

a huge *porte cochère*, and, having witnessed the pursuit of his friend, he drew a long breath, which he much required, and, wondering how people could be such fools as to interfere to save any one at the risk of a night's uncomfortable lodging, he quickened his pace and gained his own hotel.

In this, Montague had been the dupe of the Duchess, who, having remarked that the Countess was in better spirits than a woman should be under her first discovery, confided to her maid her apprehensions, and bade her, by artful words, nay, further—by promises and soft embraces, to gain from the page any command he might receive.

The Countess of Sussex, accustomed to send her billets-doux by this messenger, never enforced any particular silence, for fear of arousing suspicion, but merely bade the page deliver a note to the Ambassador. The servant of the Duchess, perceiving the boy arranging himself to go out, soon gained the intelligence, which was not attempted to be concealed, and at once conveyed it to her mistress.

The *rez de chaussée* inhabited by the mother and the daughter formed two sides of a large square, and the window of the Duchess's room commanded that of her daughter. There was but one

entrance for both suites of apartments, although a communication had been made by the rooms.

Suspecting that Montague, who had often visited her in this clandestine manner, would attempt the same with the young Countess, the Duchess resolved to mar his enterprise, and, by his capture, insure a discontinuance until the daughter was removed to England. She therefore extinguished her light, and, sitting by her window, watched with exemplary patience for the page's return. She brooded over her revenge ; for where is the woman who is convinced of fading charms, and finds a rival in her own daughter, who can sink into insignificance without a struggle ? Nay, it is but giving the Duchess the only remaining virtue which still existed in her depraved mind to remark that, in all her letters to the King, still extant, and during every conversation with the young Countess, she had endeavoured to train her against the general levity of the age, and to seek happiness in virtue ; being well aware that it never flourished long in vice.

Montague's discovered letter convinced her that now words were of no avail, and the Duchess was too intimately acquainted with the human heart to believe that criminal attachments with the young can be snapped in a moment ; she

felt assured that the Countess would send a declaration of still existing love, and would be led by the advice of Montague—he of whom it was said, “that he required but half an hour’s conversation alone with the most pious of the sex, to convert her either into a heretic or into a willing accomplice in intrigue.”

Montague, on entering the square, bade the page go quietly to his mistress and apprise her of his visit, and, during the long time in imagination that the page was absent, Montague approached the window of the Countess’s room. The Duchess had now the game in the snare; she passed rapidly into her daughter’s room, and, before the page could deliver his message, the Countess was led to her window; the Duchess opened it cautiously, and both beheld a man on the point of entering it. The Countess, really surprised, for her note had not invited this visit, screamed “*Au voleur !*” whilst the Duchess, feigning desperate fear, shouted and shrieked louder, “*à la garde !—au secours !*” Montague, seeing that it was useless to stay, retired instantly; the sleepy porter pulled the cordon, and the Ambassador escaped.

Konigsmark, once alive to a frolic, young, active, and vigorous, quickened his pace when he left Montague, in order to draw the pursuers from him with greater certainty; and, resolving

to have a little amusement before he was locked up, if it suited these guardians of the night to take him into custody, continually allowed them to near him, and then, darting away with increased velocity, he took some narrow dirty street, leading his pursuers through half the mud and mire of the metropolis, until himself worn out, when finding that he was cut off by a new party who were coming up to the chase, he quietly walked up, and was apprehended.

His dress and his manner arrested any rudeness, and on the officer taking him to the nearest guard-house, he discovered in his prisoner the commander of his own regiment. Those who first pursued, and who came panting in at the death, were dismissed, and Konigsmark, ordering some champagne, assured his junior that it was an intrigue—only an intrigue—and that to-morrow the parties would declare he was not the man. It was requisite that a report should be made, but the circumstances were such as would excite much laughter. Having assured his officer that he would attend the next morning, he bade him keep good watch during the night, and retired to his own lodgings, which he had taken the precaution to near before he gave himself up.

The next day it made a story for the amusement of the court, that Konigsmark had supplanted the English Ambassador, and was

caught coming out of the Duchess's window, and every soul believed it—such are ever the gossips of society, and thus does invention stifle truth. Montague's name was never mentioned in the affair; and the Duchess fixed the scandal upon herself by the resolute denial of all acquaintance with the Count.

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CHAPTER XVI.

MONTAGUE, who turned all occurrences to his own advantage, in his private letter to the King, remarked upon the extraordinary fickleness of the sex, and their willingness to court those who, by any public exhibition either of talent or valour, make themselves conspicuous ; thus he related, “ your Majesty will be as much surprised as shocked at the behaviour of the Duchess of Cleveland. No sooner had Count Konigsmark returned to Paris than she resumed an acquaintance with this desperado, and encouraged him so warmly, that the Count was found under the window of the Countess of Sussex, evidently having mistaken the locale. The alarm given by the latter lady, whose character for chastity has been the admiration of the Court, obliged the Swede to fly, and, after a desperate pursuit, he was captured by a guard of his own regiment. I somewhat

marvelled that one so recently suspected in England of a murder should involve himself in such an intrigue, more especially as I had myself counselled him to be of guarded manner in Paris, and had taken him to the Court, as your Majesty had publicly expressed an opinion of his innocence. The Count, by this, has gained some unenviable notoriety, but the Duchess has been severely censured."

Montague, quite aware of the contents of the Duchess's letter to the King, dispatched a man instantly to London with his letter, at the same time making earnest mention of the circumstance that Louis XIV. had desired Konigsmark to be in readiness to convey dispatches of great import to the Court of Holland; and as many discontented English already flocked to that court, vigilance must be practised to arrive at the King's project. "Indeed," (added Montague, who, in all his correspondence, seems to have used especial frankness with his Majesty,) "I have already made some advances to the Count, firstly, by kindnesses, and, secondly, by a promise of reward, if he should place the dispatch in my hands before he leaves Paris. The proposition has not been badly received, and your Majesty may rely upon my utmost exertion to discover the contents."

As this letter left Paris only two days after

the Duchess of Cleveland had dispatched hers, it was possible to arrive at the Court of Whitehall as soon, if not sooner than the first ; for in those days, the passing the Channel in boats, or small fishing smacks, was oftentimes a painfully long affair ; the slightest breeze was sufficient for an excuse : and the captain, by waiting, added a passenger or two to the courier, making all pay exorbitant prices.

This courier was desired not to spare any expense, and, moreover, if he should find the man sent by the Duchess, at Calais, he was to order him to return to Paris directly with his letter ; one to this purport being sent in the handwriting apparently of the Duchess, but which was imitated by Brett. In fact, such was Montague's readiness to avert danger, or to discover an intrigue, that few could rival him ; and he felt convinced that, if the King read the affair with Konigsmark as detailed above, there being every appearance of truth in it, his Majesty would credit his minister, and disregard all the insinuations of the Duchess.

Montague prudently whispered away the character, if any remained, of the Duchess ; it was the subject of much merriment at Versailles, and it lost nothing from the fertility of Montague's invention. He told the anecdote in detail from the communication through the page, and ex-

cited much merriment in the recital of the chase. The latter being strictly true, gave a colour of truth to the other parts, and not a soul believed but that the Count had actually one foot in the chamber when the sudden entrance of the daughter occasioned the discovery. Nor was he sparing on this subject to his monarch—seeking thereby to ruin the Duchess in the King's confidence. “Her conduct,” he said, “merits your Majesty's most serious reproof, as calculated to injure the character of the Countess of Sussex. This intrigue with the Count must have been hastily resolved upon, and, coming so immediately after the affair of Thynne, has made that unfortunate subject more commented upon. But it is more in regard to the Countess of Sussex that I press this upon your Majesty ; her fame has been so unblemished, her character so spotless, and her manner so quiet, reserved, and modest, that, up to this period, she has been pointed at as the marvel of her sex. I fear the Duchess will be entirely lost, for although, as your Majesty is well aware, a great latitude is allowed in this licentious capital, as long as the public are not actually informed of the affair, yet those most censurable themselves take the liveliest interest in defaming those who are discovered ; and thus, under the mask of virtue, attempt to conceal their own vice ; and this concealment, so generally adopted,

will now render the Duchess more vulnerable, by her being made the mark for every poisoned arrow."

The Duchess, who joyfully heard the hue and cry, little dreamt that a friend was so near to rescue Montague. She could not conceal her delight, and, to the unsuspecting Countess, it appeared a strange ebullition of merriment, on having escaped the intrusion of some midnight marauder.

"Go to bed, child," she added; "we are well rid of that man. I pray your rest may be good, and your slumbers unbroken. You must get some colour in those pallid cheeks, for his Majesty will be well aware the air of Paris does but little agree with your health, if he sees you thus pale and fatigued. We must not think of the past, excepting to gain experience for the future. Shut the window! I will have the porter better instructed as to his duty. Good night, child!"

The Duchess could not contain her joy; there was a laughing devil in that once beautiful countenance; the idea of the English Ambassador scampering through the dirty streets, and finally arrested by the police—locked up for the night—the circumstance whispered to the Countess of Northumberland as a great secret—the affair magnified and embellished to the King, were all too much to be concealed in a naturally wicked

heart ; and she so far forgot her usual pride, as to detail some part of the event to her servant, during the agreeable hour spent in preparing for bed.

Not so the Countess, whose young heart had been led captive by the insinuating Montague. No sooner was her mother gone, than the faithful page revealed the whole affair ; in a moment she comprehended how she was compromised, and suspected her mother, of having been aware of the visit, or of having planned it ; neither did she see how she could avert the blow—for Montague, who knew every inch of the house, the distribution of the rooms, the exact part occupied by the Duchess, could not unintentionally have committed the error. This coming upon the discovery that the man to whom she had foolishly yielded her heart and entrusted her honour was also the protector of her mother ; and that in a parent she had a rival, overcame one of her fragile constitution, and she sank upon her sleepless bed, a prey to repentance and remorse.

It had all been planned by the Duchess ; the maid, who had been instructed to watch the page, had given timely notice to the Duchess, who carelessly added, after hearing the recital of the page's order, " It is sufficient, Josephine ; but I had forgotten—tell Carlo to inform his Excel-

lency, that the Countess is anxious to see him as soon as possible." And the unsuspecting page, upon being questioned by Montague as to the note, added the above message, and instantly Montague hastened to obey the summons. Thus we draw the curtain for the night.

Early in the morning, and much before the usual hour of such visits, the English minister was announced to the Duchess of Cleveland. Astonished at this intrusion, after the discovery of the familiar intercourse with her daughter, the Duchess hesitated before she went to the salon; then satisfaction at the affair of the preceding night decided her to forget her injury in the gratification arising from the humiliation inflicted on the Ambassador.

On entering her salon, Montague was standing by the fire, apparently unconcerned, nor did he seem the least abashed at the entrance of the Duchess; he saluted her with his usual familiarity, and, placing a fauteuil close to the one he intended to occupy, he begged her Grace would be seated, as he had business of some import to transact, and also that her door might be denied to any—ay, even to the Countess.

This familiarity of manner by no means rendered the Duchess less haughty; she replied, that, if his Excellency had business of importance to communicate, she was constrained to

hear it; but that, if such was not actually the case, she desired she might be released from the society of one whom she could not but regard with the most marked contempt, and from which she had vainly hoped she was released for ever."

"Madam," replied Montague, "I dare say you are averse to my visits, and I assure you they are far from agreeable to me, since they have ceased to yield you pleasure. You are aware that his Majesty expects from me a true and faithful account of your proceedings; and, in our former hours of idleness and pleasure, I have shown you letters in his Majesty's handwriting—the which has long since been familiar to yourself—in which his Majesty charges me faithfully to execute this unpleasant task. It is on this account that I have ventured, thus early, to intrude my unwelcome presence, and to ask of your Grace some explanation of the extraordinary anecdote which already is current in Paris; and affording matter of laughter to some and regret to others. In the latter, I beg your Grace to include that of the Countess of Northumberland and myself."

"I am not aware how I can enlighten your Excellency on an affair of which I am totally ignorant. Perhaps the Countess of Sussex might be able to give some information."

"Your Grace, I fear, is led by a disposition to ridicule to avoid a more painful subject; and

since I perceive that you are unwilling to enter upon it, I must briefly preface it. It is reported by the thousand tongues of scandal that, last night, or early this morning, a man was pursued from your Grace's house, the cry of '*A la garde ! au secours !*' having roused the neighbourhood. I perceive the smile on your Grace's lip. I pray you to inform me of this event, as I must, in my correspondence with the King, advert to it."

"I should imagine his Excellency had need of no other chronicler than himself. I trust the representative of a King did not find running through the streets of Paris, pursued by the guard, and the idle loiterers, male and female, of Paris, at all derogatory to the character of an Ambassador?"

The smile of ignorance which spread over the countenance of Montague would have astonished either a lawyer or a play-actor. "I pray your Grace," he continued, "when your mind resumes the even tenour of its way, to forget how I might feel—to relate what did happen." There was a tone of seriousness about this, which somewhat excited the Duchess, who hastily answered—

"When ambassadors of a great country like England forget their situation, and come, like the midnight thief, to break into the house of a

mother to violate the chastity of the daughter, they well deserve the execration of the lowest, and the imprisonment which, I trust, will be of use to your Excellency."

"I am perfectly aware, madam, of your power of evasion, and I flatter myself I am not quite so ignorant as to be deceived. I speak, your Grace, of the arrest of Count Konigsmark, who, at the moment of entering into your Grace's chamber, between the hours of twelve and one, was detected by some of your attendants, a cry raised, the Count pursued, and, ultimately, captured. The procès verbal sent to the police was forwarded to me, as affecting your Grace's property—not the violation of your honour; and I know that, however much the Count by some may be suspected of murdering a man, he is not likely to have meditated *that* against your Grace, or to have imagined a theft. As I see the sneer of incredulity on your Grace's lips, perhaps the reading of this may assist your memory."

"You are worthy of being an Ambassador from a kingdom to which, I am well aware, you are a subject. I will read this neat composition." The Duchess began with a bitter sneer, which gradually changed to alarm, and, at the conclusion, her face was suffused with colour. "It is beautifully contrived," she added. "May I ask

what you have paid this poor Swede for his perjury?"

"Madam," said Montague, with great dignity, "I came with the intention of sheltering you, if possible, from the scandal which will arise from this circumstance, and was prepared for all the evasions which an artful woman could suggest; but to have been accused of causing this procès verbal to be drawn up—which must have been done when the Count was captured—and to find your Grace insinuating that I could best supply the intelligence I required, surpasses even what I contemplated, and leaves me only the painful alternative of dispatching this document, signed and sealed by the police, without comment, to his Majesty."

"And perhaps your Excellency will also enclose the note written by the Countess of Sussex, and the message delivered to your Excellency by her page; and as I perceive the fear of my character has rendered you heedless of your own, perhaps the evidence of the porter, to whom your person is well known, of your having entered the *porte cochère* with the page, may somewhat inform the King who was the intended violater of the Countess of Sussex. Your Excellency, I presume, could not have mistaken the window?"

“Madam, I am in total ignorance of your Grace’s allusions. I pray you to keep closer to the subject, which constitutes a grave charge against yourself, as the guardian of the Countess of Sussex. You know full well how attached his Majesty is to *his daughter* (Montague accented this carefully), and you are not unaware of the enterprising character of Konigsmark. This document is a confession of a fact. The soldiers who captured him still hold him in durance. His person is as well known as that of the grand monarch himself; and if your Grace still perseveres in all denial of this, every person of the police, and the guard who hunted the intruder (but I suspect not uninvited), who never lost sight of him for a second, and who ultimately seized him, are ready to testify that he came from this house, scared by the alarm, and that, to avoid compromising you, he endeavoured to elude the pursuit.”

“Women are made bad by circumstances,” said the Duchess; “and your Excellency would ruin the reputation of a saint.”

“Your Grace grows extravagant in the simile; I beg you to be more rational.”

“And pray, to what am I indebted for the honour of this visit?”

“To a due consideration for yourself, and the unfortunate predicament in which you are involved—to a wish, on my part, entirely to hush

up this matter—that you declare, in writing, to the police, that you are ignorant of the person who entered your house—that you cannot possibly swear to his identity—and that you are aware a man of Count Konigsmark's rank would not have intruded to commit any act derogatory to a gentleman.”

“And thus to nullify all future evidence—to be unable to declare to the King that you were the man—to throw a huge mantle over the guilty shoulders of the Ambassador, making his scape-goat release the reward of his perfidy. Know, Mr. Montague, this: There is a boundary over which the most guilty fears to leap; nor will I further involve myself against my conscience. If ever woman had cause to hate a man, that woman is myself, and you are the man. Any compact with you now, any forgiveness on my part, or any conversation with you, would impair the evidence I have forwarded to the King. I have sent your own letter to the Countess *to her father*; and I wonder much that one so astute as your Excellency should have written it, when an *écrivain public* would have done it for a sou, and your handwriting be no longer the best evidence against yourself. I despise you, and I hate you, as once I loved and adored you. The man who has made my own child my rival cannot but be an object of abhorrence. This Swede dare not say

he was invited to this midnight intrusion. I feel innocent, and I dare you to make me appear guilty."

"It is for your Grace to determine," replied Montague, with the most consummate coolness and effrontery. "You well know how far your Grace's character is compromised already, and how disposed all people are to entertain scandal of their neighbours. As far as regards your communication with our blessed sovereign, I have little to fear; I have already prepared his Majesty for its reception, and aroused his suspicions as to your conduct. This *procès verbal* completes the evidence. And, in conclusion, madam, I must apprise you that, since I cannot but believe this document, with all its circumstantial proofs, I shall be constrained to stop the allowance of his Majesty, until I receive his future commands."

"Your Excellency may retire; and as you will have no longer the excuse of any monetary affairs for your intrusion, I shall, I hope, be spared the necessity of forbidding your admission by my servants. That indignity, for my own sake, I would spare you. My daughter's fortune places me far beyond any immediate want; and the next minister, who will shortly arrive, will pay up my arrears. It is said 'none hate like those who once loved;' I pray you, consider this proverb. I will sum-

mon my servants to attend the door." And here the Duchess, making a very stiff and courtly curtsy, quitted the room.

On the servant answering the summons, Montague carelessly said—"Have the kindness to inform the Countess of Sussex that I am anxious to see her for a moment."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE Church of Santa Maria de Pie di Grotta is so called from its vicinity to the famous grotto of Pausilippo, and so well known in this age of travelling as to need no description ; it gives the name to a grand annual festival, on the eve of which a concert is given by the magistrates of Naples, to the populace, in one of the public streets, arranged for the occasion.

It was the eve of this festival, when José Vergani had taken leave of the Count de Meraviglia, and on the following day, the money was to be paid, and Isabella restored to her parent.

The Count, finding José Vergani a man who seemed blessed with ubiquity, and who so well guarded himself against all arrest as to defy the miserable police, thought it most prudent to keep his word, and try again the honour of this fearless marauder.

Knowing that on this day the church would be crowded, and that many would loiter about the premises, he took no servant, but, mounting a sturdy horse, rode rather quickly towards his destination. The road was plentifully sprinkled with passengers, and here and there some miserable beggars solicited alms from those about to frequent the church ; amongst these were in truth, the lame, the deaf, and the blind.

The Count was not proof against the misery he observed. It has been said by one who knew human nature well, that charity was more liberally bestowed upon those who had lost a limb, because the giver had some proof of the justness of the claim. In this the Count might have spent a fortune ; it seemed as if all the *stroppiati* had assembled from all parts of Italy, to reap the reward of having been maimed ; and, with a generous hand, the Count dispensed his charity. The blessings of Heaven were invoked liberally, and an inward feeling that the day might prove a blessing to himself was the result of these invocations.

Arriving at the church, he gave his horse to a poor boy, desiring him to walk it slowly about, and, going at once to the indicated altar, he knelt down and made a solemn vow to forget all former injury by Vergani and others, and most piously declared that his vengeance was at an end, and that

he would no longer pursue those who had robbed him of his child. This done, he arose, and looked carefully about the church, but no one approached him ; nor did he see any face with which he was familiar. At last, having waited an hour, he remounted his horse, and slowly pursued his way towards his home. He stopped to relieve a poor man, who, quite exhausted, had been unable to move further towards the church ; and as he did so, a man of small stature, mounted on a rough looking mule, remarked, " that a day so well begun would end joyously." The remark aroused the Count, who had given way to a low melancholy foreboding ; he fixed his eyes on the stranger, and in an instant recognised Vergani. At that moment, in spite of his prayers and his determination, a sudden animation overspread his countenance, and the features betrayed the revenge which was not entirely obliterated.

" I thought," begun Vergani, in a careless mood, " that your prayers might have deadened that feeling against your best friend."

" It is somewhat of a droll expression," replied the Count, with a forced smile. " One, methinks, who has robbed a father of his only child, might have found another word than friend."

" Your opinion will be changed before we part, and I rejoice to see a different expression] of countenance ; for, if this business be not con-

cluded before the darkness of night begins, it will never be arranged. Take that lane to the left, Count; it will not carry us far from our road, and we shall be alone. The Count Meraviglia, I know, fears no single man alive, and José Vergani has yet to learn what fear may be. To our bargain—*patto chiaro, amico caro*, is a proverb well known to all who follow my mode of life. We never have debts; ours is a brisk interchange, wherein no credit is given.”

“I have the money with me—here it is. I came prepared to fulfil my promise to the utmost, and to give implicit confidence to José Vergani.”

There was a certain degree of pride visible upon the face of the contrabandist as he answered, “Those who have trusted to me, have never been betrayed. You shall not outdo me in generosity. Keep that money until you are satisfied, and listen to the recital; and when you see the girl, if you are not satisfied she is your child, then our bargain ends, and your money returns to your own coffers. The vow—an audible vow to human ears, as well as supplicatory to those above, I myself witnessed, and I hope may ever be kept. Of what use would my blood be to you? Revenge is a poor spirit, born of pride and nurtured by cowardice.” Vergani said this in a careless manner, swinging himself from side to side on his mule, and jumping over the animal

with all the lightsome activity of a boy. Little would any one have dreamt that in this playful body there existed a heart which hardly ever quickened its pulsation from alarm, and that so little did even the sum of money to be received turn him from his accustomed playfulness, that at the moment it never occupied a thought.

"I accustom the animal to this," said Vergani. "I am sometimes obliged to be off and on in a short space of time."

"The anecdote to which I was to listen with attention, seems to have escaped your recollection," said the Count. "I am aware I must await your humour, although the delay be ever so painful."

"I crave your pardon, Count; but I was wondering where I should build my next house, and wavering between Sicily and Sardinia. You shall not complain again. It is now nineteen years since you were walking with your wife in the princely gardens of Meraviglia. You had not been married then three years, and I will say, with all respect for the rest of us married men, I never saw a picture of greater happiness—excuse me, Count, if I cause you grief. I see your emotion, and I honour the tear which pays this tribute of affection to the memory of brighter and happier days."

"Go on," said the Count, "and I pray you

heed not my emotion, but use your shortest language to assuage my curiosity."

"At that time I was associated with the celebrated Manfrini—ah, you start! his name was a knell of sorrow wherever it sounded. He was the incarnation of the Devil; from him I caught that recklessness, that disdain of danger, which has saved me a thousand times from a public execution. At the time to which I refer, your child was close to you, in the arms of a maid-servant, and we watched you and the Countess as you gave the little beauty some of the various fruits within your reach. The scene touched my heart, and I remarked to Manfrini, how pleasant it must be to roll in riches, to love and be beloved, and have a child to keep the chain of affection more certainly riveted. Manfrini turned to me, and, with the quick lightning of his eye, made me start as he said, 'By to-morrow half those riches shall be ours; that scene of delight become one of despair, and the chain be broken. Come this way,' he replied, as he pointed to a narrow path. 'Listen:—Our late affairs have been far from prosperous, and, between ourselves, Vergani, our Calabrian associates will not be much pleased at our return empty-handed. Our horses are fleet, our small felucca ready for sea, and the prize is within our grasp, if we have the courage to shut our hands. Now, that quality, so

very useful in our trade, neither of us lack much, so do you, Vergani, draw the Count and Countess forward, whilst I make a dash at that child, and, if I know anything of human nature, the sum that will be paid as a ransom will be better and more portable than half the cargo of a merchantman.' You may remember, Count, your coming hastily forward on hearing groans? I was the person who feigned the near approach of death, and whilst both you and the Countess endeavoured to alleviate my sufferings, the maid was seized and silenced, and your child conveyed away. A whistle apprised me that the deed was done, and I instantly recovered. You promised to go to your house to send me some cordial. No sooner were you at a short distance, than I joined my companion, took shipping from the jutting point where you landed near my cave, and in three days your child was under the protection of the wife of Manfrini. We called it Isabella Manfrini, after the new mother, and in the presence of all our gang, twenty-five in number, we marked the child close under the arm, with a cross. You were not the only father who lost his child, for we found it a vastly profitable trade. The vigilance used to discover your infant rendered it impossible for either Manfrini or myself to venture to Naples; and, in consequence of the wants of our gang, we became more active

in our contraband trade ; leaving the child to become valuable in proportion to its absence from you, and all being resolved to return it for a adequate ransom. You remember the frequent communications you received, and your avowed determination to follow up any discovery with the apprehension and death of the culprit ? We were never very partial to courts of justice, and last night was my finish to any further exhibition before the judge, if I can avoid it.

“ As you became more merciless, we became more exorbitant. You knew that your child was alive, and we resolved to be paid for it. I have kept my promise, for I swore to receive the full amount we proposed, with interest, at five per cent. My demand upon you is, as nearly as I can calculate such a line of figures, correct. I remember leaving at your own chateau a lock of the child's hair.

“ Time passed on ; we had other affairs to attend to, but yours was never forgotten. At last we made a great seizure, and proceeded to Manfrini's cottage, which stood concealed in a thick ravine, to be approached only by a narrow slippery path, the windings of which, and the other paths branching from the direct one at every turn, rendered it almost impossible for any but one well acquainted with the locale to arrive at the cottage. Here we all assembled, twelve in

number—the rest had fallen, either by the hand of the public executioner, or in affrays. We had a curious custom, which we borrowed from Corsica. Whenever one of our number was executed in the course of justice, as people call it, the waistcoat of that man was hung by the side of Manfrini's chimney, and was never removed until one of the family who caused either the apprehension or the execution was sacrificed by one of us. In my time, I have seen four waistcoats at once hanging for vengeance. We met at Manfrini's to distribute the booty, and, for a time, to separate, because some troops had been sent to disturb our repose; there was a vast deal of gold in the cave belonging to the cottage, and some not unpalatable wine; the sight of the one and the taste of the other did much to excite cupidity and quarrels. How it began, I never could exactly remember; but a fight ensued; and I verily believe Manfrini, who was a giant in strength, and who never drank anything but water, excited us all to drink freely of the wine, and, when the quarrel began, made short work of the whole twelve; for it was noon the next day before those who survived their wounds—and I was the best of them—discovered that Manfrini, his wife, and your child had left the cottage, seized a boat, and trusted to the wind and the rough sea to save them.

“ We also obtained a larger boat, and went in pursuit of a small boat we saw from the summit of one of the hills, a good way off ; but we soon got sick of this, and, being fearful of losing sight of land, we tacked, stood in shore, landed, and separated.

“ From that moment to the other day, I never saw your daughter. The mark is upon her, to which I will swear—and so will another, who is now alive. How I again got forward in the world, and made my fortune, is a secret. Your daughter will herself fill up the remainder of the time, and it is for you to be satisfied ; I myself have no doubt upon the subject.

“ That’s a good old dog of yours, and knows his friends. From the time your daughter was returned to me by Benvenuto, I have made friends with him. I could have robbed you, and hung you up by the heels a thousand times ; and if you had executed one of our men, and the waistcoat had hung by the side of Manfrini’s chimney, long as the time might have been—for our oath extended until our death—you would have dangled from your own trees. I have done. I have told you the whole truth. You will find as beautiful a woman as man could desire to look upon. I know nothing of her life, which I hear has been one of adventure ; but you will find a temper rarely equalled—a fine form—a lovely face—eyes

beaming with animation—a countenance expressive of intellect, and with a peculiar turn of the lip, which indicates an unwillingness to forgive an injury. This, I presume, may somewhat favour the conviction that she is your child. We are arrived—you have nothing to fear—Vergani's honour is pledged for your personal safety; and also, that if you are not convinced Isabella is the lost child of Meraviglia, he will not only see you safe from his premises, but in safety to your own. We must dismount here; we shall have no need to lead our animals." He gave a sharp whistle, and an apparently old man, but one evidently disguised, appeared. Vergani only pointed to the animals, and without saying a word walked forward.

The Count was as resolute a man as could be found in those parts. He gave up his horse without a remark, and followed his strange guide. He felt convinced that Vergani would deal honourably with him, for he had refused his money, which he might have taken; and, from the number of nods of recognition made by Vergani to the passers by, there could be no doubt that this active chief had taken every precaution against a surprise.

"Is it far we have to walk?" said the Count.

"About a minute more will be sufficient. There is the cottage—well sequestered, is it not?"

I wonder how many thousand times you have passed this road, and never knew that such a place existed. It is here where Manfrini and myself occasionally resided during our active operations in these parts ; and in the very room in which you will be restored to your daughter, did the poor little child sleep the first night it was taken from your protection. But, once more, before we enter the cottage—if you are not satisfied, keep your money ; I can make more of the article in another manner. I deal with you honestly, honourably—because I believe, from your earnest behaviour in the church, of the sincerity of your intentions.”

“ May I see her alone ? for I would not any one were present when I recognise my child.”

“ There is but an old woman in the house ; outside we are better provided with attendants. Here,” Vergani continued, as he beckoned to the woman, “ show this gentleman to the door of Isabella’s apartment ; give him the key of the outer door ; let him examine every place, to know that he is alone ; and, having so done, await me at the cross. Follow her, Count, I will loiter about here. I give you one hour from this time, before I summon you.”

With a quick step, the Count gained the cottage, and closed the outer door, having received information of the apartment ; but as he ap-

proached the door he trembled, not from fear, but anxiety. He rapped, and was desired to enter. Before him stood Isabella, an exact image of her mother, at the very age when she died, and dressed nearly in the same garb. Struck with the sight, he was speechless; and Isabella, who fixed her eyes upon the man she believed to be her father, felt unable to advance a step. For a minute or two the Count remained motionless; his eyes alone seemed greedily devouring the charms before him; when suddenly he seized her arm, and baring it, discovered, as described by Vergani, the mark of the cross. This was no sooner seen, than he searched more towards the back, and suddenly falling on her neck, he burst into a flood of tears; faltering, as he said—"My daughter! oh, my daughter!"

. Indeed, the Count could not have been deceived, for never was there a greater resemblance than in the child and mother. The Count had tenderly loved his wife. He looked at his child—gazed upon her—and then, as impetuously, embraced and kissed her.

The feelings of the two were different. Isabella could not experience that affectionate attachment for one whom she could not possibly remember, and yet she felt a sudden fondness for the man; but the Count's heart was full, the tears streamed down his cheek, and not a word could he utter,

but "My child—my child!" It had more of pain than pleasure; it was an intense suffering, arising from hope gratified. He pressed her hands, caressed them, gazed upon her face in silence, and seemed lost to all the world but the object before him. It was then that Isabella, in the silvery voice of youth, inclined her cheek to his, and said—"My father!" It broke the spell which entranced him. He kissed her fervently, and recovering himself, he led her gently from the room, desiring her to prepare for her departure; and then, beckoning to the old woman, who watched the outer door with the unsleeping eye of a Cerberus, he bade her summon Vergani. He appeared in a moment.

"A fortnight ago," the Count began, "I should have rejoiced in your execution—now, I bless your presence. Here is our agreed sum, but I shall send you more. I am convinced. Can you assist me to some conveyance for my child?"

"At the gate leading to the road there is one ready. I felt assured you could not be deceived, for she is your child. I need no further money now; but all I ask is your assistance, should I need it hereafter, and the permission to inform you, should I fall into bad hands. Vergani leaves you now, perhaps for ever; and may your vows, this morning made, last for ever in your heart. I have yet a wild life to lead, but never will I

wrong you again. I have fortunately been able to repair the injury of my younger days. Now, fare thee well; I will see you to the carriage, and then, adieu for ever." At this moment Isabella was seen advancing. Her father took her by the hand; Vergani, with the bow of a courtier, kissed the other, and advanced to the gate. At that moment a trusty servant of a certain duke was awaiting Vergani to conclude the purchase of Isabella at any price. Had he arrived one hour earlier, the chances are a million to one that Vergani would have mastered the little virtue he possessed, and sold her to the highest bidder.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THAT night Vergani embarked with his followers on board Benvenuto's schooner, and was never heard of again in the vicinity of Naples. He has been resuscitated in Auber's opera of the *Sirene*, and his escape dramatized. He was a man capable of any daring, but never shed blood if he could avoid it. He is known to have done many extravagant acts of kindness, and been concerned in the most desperate deeds of plunder and rapine.

Isabella's account of her life was listened to with much attention by her father, the first evening ; and, although Konigsmark's name was mentioned, it was only as a deliverer. Here, indeed, her ingenuity was somewhat taxed, and she was obliged to wander into the regions of fiction.

After her shipwreck in Calabria, she described

her re-embarking to come to Naples—both Konigsmark and herself having taken shipping at Palermo—that contrary winds forced them near Maritimo, and there, discovering a suspicious vessel, which pursued them, they made all sail to the westward.

The pursuer was declared an Algerine pirate, and every precaution was taken to avoid her. Each vessel seemed to sail nearly the same. The chase continued for three days and nights, and the fourth morning a harbour of refuge was found in Barcelona. There it became necessary to wait for the recovery of her health, which had been impaired by the excitement and the fear of being captured by the Algerines; and from that port she again took ship under the protection of Benvenuto, who was suspected of always being one of Vergani's gang, and who had given Konigsmark to understand that the father of his rescued captive was alive. Konigsmark saw her on board, gave her money, and recommended her to the care of Benvenuto and the protection of Heaven.

Such was her history, after the battle with the Turks. It had enough of truth for a foundation, and not the most rigid moralist could object to a daughter wishing to be received as an innocent girl, and hiding her shame under the veil of ro-

mance. It would have been a cruelty to have rushed into her father's arms, to have declared herself the mistress of the Swede, and to have charged her parent with the fault, as having lost her before she could defend herself.

"I think," said the Count, "it would be prudent to travel for a year or two, your sudden appearance, the splendour of our house, your marked beauty, would only excite envy, and make you the mark for all detractors."

"My father's wishes are mine. I am ready at any moment. I am too insignificant, I hope, to excite envy, and have little to fear from detractors."

Isabella was conducted to a splendid apartment; servants attended her bidding, and all the luxuries of life seemed showering upon her. She valued not one of these, excepting as making her more beloved by Konigsmark. He was engraven on her heart—for him she had sacrificed all a woman holds most dear, and now, with riches, noble birth, a high and powerful family, she hoped to win him to her as a husband. The proposition made by her father accorded exactly with her own wishes. She was certain that her faithless lover was in England, and she believed her ascendancy over him so decided, that, to be once in his society, she should recover his love, and

become his wife. She excused, as a generous woman can excuse, all his faults ; she attributed his sudden desertion to imperative necessity ; and his daring deeds, his quick active disposition and mind, irresistibly won him her heart. It was a sleepless night—one devoted to the thought of him who, at that time, was planning the murder of a husband, to obtain his wife. Isabella was jealous, and, with the warm Italian blood, and nurtured in scenes of savage revenge, she was capable of any deed ; but, loving as she did, she kept down the fiend which occasionally seemed prompting her to hatred. No ; in Konigsmark she saw her fancy realized—no other being alive could share her heart ; all, all was centered in him. He was bold, daring, brave, his name had become European ; he was a favourite at all courts, admired by all women, quick in advance, and ready in reply. A warrior of fame, and still a musician, as stern in command, as melodious in his warbling ; he delighted by turns in the roll of the drum, the blood-stirring sound of the trumpet, and the tinkling of the guitar. Love and war were his idols ; he cared not for money or wine ; his whole soul was in battle and in intrigue.

That such a woman, with an Italian soul, nurtured amongst pirates, and rescued on the brink of destruction, should love, and love ardently, cannot surprise. Now she was free, rich, rein-

stated in rank, and she gave way to her love with all the warmth of the climate of which she was a native. Panting again to see the only man she cared to see, she had recourse to those innocent female arts, such as pretending reluctance, yet yielding to the wish of a parent. She took up his idea—began to fear the quick tongue of malice—was apprehensive of exciting jealousy, and dreaded to be approached by Vergani, who, she well knew, was aware of her secret, and to whom she owed, as the price of her liberation, a large sum. Seldom, if ever, she moved from the house, and then only in the vicinity of it; the fear of a recapture was the ostensible reason. In every conversation, she invariably turned it upon the delight of seeing foreign nations, and so urged on the Count, that, early in March, it was resolved to set out, and journey by short and easy stages.

There required but little preparation, for the Count had been accustomed to hardships and privations, and from the time of the death of his wife, had not rolled in splendour, or been enervated by luxury.

On the 27th of February, they set forward, leaving behind them the splendid estate of the once powerful Meraviglia; the dog, and one or two old servants being left in charge.

It was about four days after Montague's visit

to the Duchess of Cleveland, that Konigsmark arrived at the embassy, and demanded immediate admission.

"I come," he said, "from the King. I am ordered to proceed direct to Holland, and afterwards to ——."

"And the dispatches?" said Montague.

"Are to be given to me at St. Denis. Orders have been sent forward that horses are to be in preparation, nor am I to loiter on the road."

Montague fixed his eyes upon Konigsmark, as if to read, in that index of the heart, if his words were true.

"You suspect me," said the Swede, "and why? Am I not bound up in your welfare—does not everything which gives you power give me also a better protection? I have told you the truth; in three hours from this time, I must be in front of the Church of St. Denis. If you have still doubts, come with me."

"You say rightly, what gives me power assists also your projects. I will be plain with you: I am fearful that the Duchess of Cleveland's messenger has succeeded in arriving in England, and that her letters will reach the King; he is still somewhat attached to her, and is of so variable a complexion, that he may turn to her again, with as little thought as when he discharged her; if he does, my downfall is certain. Charles would

sacrifice his best servant for his worst woman. Still, if I could give him further information as to the movements of the French king, the intelligence might keep me some time longer in my tottering seat ; therefore it is that I would arrive at the contents of these despatches, which must be of great import. I leave this to you."

"I have but one reply to this—whatever is entrusted to my honour, nothing shall tempt me to violate. The King selects me as his most trustworthy servant—shall I prove myself unworthy of his confidence ? Why has he selected the front of the church of St. Denis ? Because he knew I should then have left Paris, and the despatches be safe. No—no, your Excellency, whatever I could do honourably—that is, as a bargain—I will do ; but letters confided to my trust shall never be opened."

Montague looked at him with surprise.

"You seem astonished at an honest sentiment emanating from myself. Why so ? I bargain with you for the hand of Lady Elizabeth—what is there dishonourable in that ? I have fought the battles of various nations ; you may say I am a hired murderer, as mercenary troops may always be called, but is it reckoned dishonourable ? I have pledged my faith a hundred times—has your monarch done less, or yourself either ? I have run great risks——"

"Yes—yes, Count," said Montague, interrupting him, "and had narrow escapes."

"Such as your Excellency experienced the other night, in the affair of the Countess of Sussex."

"The Duchess of Cleveland, I assure you, Count——"

"I fancy you are too well known to her, to cause a hue and cry. Never mind this—the despatches, once in my possession, I will guard with care; if you can get at them before, that is your affair. But light as I hold my honour in regard to women, I never have sullied it, either in war, or when confidence has been reposed in me."

"What various significations that word honour must have!" said Montague, with a smile.

"It is true. One can honourably sell, and another as honourably buy, even if it is a step-daughter. The man who, for conscience sake, and the fear of committing a crime 'forbid by heavenly, fined by human law,' abstains from it, gains nothing in the world's estimation for honour. Let him commit a murder in a duel, or punctually pay a debt which has been contracted by his being swindled, he is highly honourable. In intrigue, the word is never used; but we read often of an honourable messenger, and I pray your Excellency to consider me as such."

"At any rate, Count, use all honourable

means to arrive at the contents of these despatches."

"Of that you may rely."

"Here are letters for Lady Algernon and Lady Ogle. That affair can hardly fail. They are strongly written in your behalf. If I could counsel so desperate a lover as Count Konigsmark, I would advise his travelling with them to Paris. Travellers, like sisters, soon discover tempers; and there are a thousand minute circumstances to be turned to advantage, a thousand little attentions to be paid, wants discovered, and remedies offered. I shall await your letters and return with much anxiety."

"Then, fare thee well, kind Ambassador; my word of honour is pledged to the performance of my promise in the event of my success, and I hope we may pass the spring comfortably in Paris. I have no further time but to repeat—Good by." Konigsmark mounted his horse, and, taking the route by the Fauxbourg St. Denis, was within an hour at the place of rendezvous.

Never did Konigsmark grieve more over the loss of Vratz than now; but the name or the person never occurred to his memory without a secret awe. The last words written by his once faithful retainer he kept always about him; a kind of superstitious fear prevented his destroying them; and sometimes, when his mind

reverted to the scene of the Lapland witches, the Egyptian sorcerer, and the ring, he fell into his usual belief, that his fate was predestined. The fate predicted for Borasky, "that he should die a vile death for a deed done for another," had come to pass, and the dying man who foretold that "the hand *he* had dishonoured, should strike the fatal blow upon himself," made his flesh creep with apprehension. To what hand could this allude? and how could Lady Elizabeth Percy, the star of his destiny, as he believed, lead him to destruction? Musing over these things, and with vivid recollections of scenes at Madrid, he stood by the side of his horse, with his hands upon the saddle-bow, and his face resting upon them. Suddenly, he was startled from his reverie of former days. An officer in uniform touched him slightly on the shoulder.

"Quick, sir," he said, "his Majesty awaits you."

Konigsmark hastily replied that "his orders were to remain where he was."

The stranger answered, as he directed Konigsmark to a carriage, "Quick, sir; his Majesty is not accustomed to wait."

From the hand of the King, Konigsmark received a small packet, with these injunctions—"Deliver it into her own hands, and await her answer, but return not without it; if she hesi-

tates, urge her, and remember that Count Konigsmark communicates only with the King of France."

Konigsmark bowed lowly. The King drove on towards Paris, desiring his attendants to go quickly through the town in which he was to be buried. And strange was the abhorrence of Louis XIV. in this respect. He dismantled the splendid palace of St. Germain, far—far superior in point of situation to that of Versailles, which he selected, merely because he could see St. Denis from the windows of the former, and distinctly observe the spire of the church, in the vaults of which he was to be interred. The greatest minds have always some littleness. Never was beauty of climate and of view more sacrificed for a childish abhorrence, than in this case.

Konigsmark rode briskly forward, attended by one servant.

On the evening of that day, a letter was delivered to Montague, from Lady Algernon. It ran thus :—

"The Countess of Northumberland's letter to her daughter has occasioned me much surprise ; for although it is natural enough that a mother might wish to see her child, and one whose education has been so cared for, and whose manners are so proper, yet I cannot allow her to be involved in the levity of Paris society, and liable to

meet the murderer of her husband. An account of the trial has been forwarded to me, and, although the King rejoiced, and the judge favoured, *I* am not convinced. Would it become the heiress of all the Percies to commune with a man whose associates were hung for murder? That point admits of no doubt—and the murdered man her own husband! I hear your Excellency has taken this Swedish Count to the court of the Grand Monarque, to whom I beg you will present my respectful duty—a duty such as a subject of a great country may owe to any foreign king; for, being a near relation of the heiress of all the Percies, I may claim the honour of the acquaintance of the French sovereign. I shall, as soon as convenient, return to England, and shall take care that the next marriage is somewhat more suitable to my granddaughter's rank than a rich plebeian. I have desired the Lady Elizabeth—for I cannot call her by the degrading name of Lady Ogle—to write to her mother, or to direct her lady who attends upon her so to do, should she herself be fatigued. I have the honour to remain your Excellency's friend."

The Countess received a very different letter. Hers contained the news that Lady Algernon thought of returning to England, after paying her respects at the court of Hanover; but that the Lady Ogle would use all her influence to turn

her from that route, and direct her towards Paris. In this letter there was only a trivial allusion to Konigsmark, and none at all to the fate of her second husband.

"Brett," said the Ambassador, "read this cross-grained old hag's letter. By the King, my master! we shall be foiled after all. There is reason in what she says, and she is stubborn as a donkey, when once she takes the fancy in her head. The Swede is our only hope; he who would murder a woman's husband to wed her himself, is not a man to turn lightly from his intentions."

"The difficulty will be," said Brett, "to place him in the right track; he believes her to be at Amsterdam, from which place the letter is dated."

"I have but little hope, Brett. I feel that cloudy presentiment, which seems to threaten a multitude of disasters, and I could be almost weak enough to consult the King's astrologer. That Duchess will work my ruin if she can—a jealous woman is unforgiving. Then the failure of this affair, all—all seems coming to overwhelm me, but, like a tennis ball, I will rebound the further from the strength of the blow. I have not long parted with the Swede, and he talked about honour as if he were of familiar acquaintance with it. It made me smile to think that one who was

tried for murder, and who must have been protected by witches or fairies, could talk of honour."

"One must talk of something," said Brett, "and a man generally talks most upon subjects of which he knows least ; it is not, therefore, astonishing that the Swede should be profuse of his words. Cannot we send a man to overtake him, and give him this intelligence ?"

"He rode briskly away, after receiving his despatches, which the King himself gave. It was my intention to have conversed with him, after he had received his orders, and I went myself to St. Denis. I saw him leave the King's carriage at a gallop, and his Majesty, recognising me, bade me follow until he was clear of the town he abhors, and then held me so long in conversation about the Countess of Sussex, that, when released, I could not have overtaken the Count. Where he is sent to I cannot surmise, but, from what the King said some nights since, the destination, I imagine, must be Holland."

"I think, your Excellency, that the Count, if he finds the birds flown, will write to you, and if he does not write, you may rely upon it he will manage to meet with them. I have no doubt that the King, finding you at St. Denis, at the very place where the man under your protection was to receive his orders, suspected something and therefore entangled you in a discourse."

“It may be, Brett,” said Montague. “What is this?” Here a page entered, and gave the Ambassador the letter of Lady Ogle. “By St. George! we are not lost yet! If Lady Ogle is resolved to visit Paris—and where is the young heart which does not sigh to see it?—she may become restive. She has large fortunes of her own. It would require but a whisper to strengthen her wish—eh, Brett?”

“Another courier might yet save us.”

“Order one instantly, and I will write a letter, which shall either confirm or ruin our intentions. I can bid him follow to whatever place she is gone.”

“Perhaps it would not be amiss to write one to Lady Algernon, saying, that the Count had left Paris by the order of the King; it would have the novelty of truth.”

CHAPTER XIX.

"**THEN** it is hereabouts she resides," said Konigsmark, as he looked at a large red house which overlooked one of the many canals which separate the streets of Amsterdam—"and, if one had time and leisure enough to survey this extraordinary city, its strange appearance might plead an excuse for a residence of some weeks ; but that women can delight in such scenes as must meet the eye in the navigation of these canals and dykes, is strange. Go you to the inn, and await my coming ; and, as thou art of heavy memory, be careful not to venture abroad without a guide, for the Cretan labyrinth must be about as easy to thread as this strange town ; and harkee, sirrah, order me dinner at three, and hold thyself in readiness to depart at any minute."

The French servant, to whom this was addressed, seemed little inclined to leave his mas-

ter, as the similarity of the streets bewildered him, and, knowing not a word of the Dutch language, he felt afraid of being lost.

“Take that street to the right,” said Konigsmark, “and then the second to the left is that wherein is our hotel.”

After diligent inquiry, Konigsmark at length discovered the abode of Lady Algernon. She was still at Amsterdam; a thousand times had she resolved on leaving, and as often had she declared the season not far enough advanced, and countermanded the order.

Lady Ogle, whose young mind had comprehended the neatness of French dress, was impatient to remove to Paris; but her grandmother had determined not to hazard one so young and one so rich amongst those men so celebrated for intrigue, and in the society of women of notoriously light character. For the first time in her life did Lady Ogle believe herself a free agent, and yet she did not dare whisper her supposed independence. The same stiff behaviour was visible in Lady Algernon, who, dressed in the height of the fashion, reclined in a huge fauteuil. “Lady Ogle,” she began, “I would that you acted more as becomes your rank; I grieve much to see you painting silly flowers, when, for some of the smallest coin, one infinitely better done might be purchased.”

"I must do something, good grandmamma."

"I have before told you those terms of endearment are much in use amongst the lower orders. It is proper we should be called by our proper titles; it has more of respect and less of familiarity in it."

"Then, Lady Algernon," said Lady Ogle, the colour mounting to her cheeks, for she began to show a little of that temper which, in after life, was rather conspicuous—"I must tell you that idleness is not congenial to my taste, neither does this city please me as a residence, neither can I sit still to hear poor gentlewomen read to me. I would act for myself, see for myself, hear for myself."

"The saints protect her!" said Lady Algernon; "the loss of her plebeian husband has somewhat injured her intellect." Here Lady Algernon felt the forehead of her charge, and, calling to a servant, bade him go for a doctor of repute.

The servants of that household never dared disobey Lady Algernon; and, although Lady Ogle declared herself well in every respect, Lady Algernon declared she was feverish, and that the heiress of all the Percies was in some danger.

"I tell you, Lady Algernon," said the young widow, "I begin to weary of this solitude. I own it is kindly meant; but surely I must be the best judge of my own feelings."

"Poor soul! poor soul!" ejaculated Lady Algernon. "Bid the doctor come quickly!"

At this moment Konigsmark stood by the large portal. Wishing to escape observation, he had changed his dress, and was now habited as a grave Hollander. On the servant's opening the door to go for a doctor, Konigsmark was the first person he saw, and addressing himself to him, inquired if he could direct him to a doctor.

"You have well selected the person of whom to make the inquiry. I believe, throughout Amsterdam, none is of greater practice than myself."

"Then walk in here, Mynheer; the great English lady desires a doctor, and she is hasty under any delay."

Never was adventure more to Konigsmark's mind; he hated anything which he possessed either without trouble, disguise, or danger. He had little fear of detection, for when Lady Algernon before saw him, he was dressed in the extreme of French fashion, which was at sad variance with the costume of the Hollander. He knew well Lady Algernon's weak point, and was not fearful of offending her.

On being ushered into the room, the Count bowed lowly, and in the French language, and with French courtesy—for that is most in words

and empty compliments—he surmised that his services were not required for the Lady Algernon, as she was the picture of health.

“ I have sent for you, sir,” Lady Algernon began, “ for my granddaughter, who has suffered much lately from the sudden death of her husband. It needs not that I should detail that event, although the mouths of vulgar men, owing to those vile articles, newspapers, do sometimes mention the name of Lady Ogle. I fear this morning she is somewhat feverish. Bid the Lady Ogle to come to me.”

Lady Ogle thought the best plan to gain her point was to humour her grandmother, and therefore came at the bidding.

Konigsmark bowed respectfully to her, and, without advancing towards her, turned to Lady Algernon, and remarked that the face appeared flushed ; and so indeed it did ; for Lady Ogle, although she did not bring the features of Konigsmark back to her mind, felt a certain indefinable thrill as she stood in the presence of the Count. Fearing he was detected, a sudden redness exhibited itself upon him. He recovered himself instantly, and in most respectful terms solicited permission to feel her ladyship’s pulse. The courteous manner of Konigsmark, his great deference for the opinion of the grandmother, and his respectful bearing, soon placed him firmly

in Lady Algernon's good opinion ; whilst, as he felt the pulse of her whom for years he had considered as his star, and in whom he saw all his future wealth, a slight trembling—not of fear, but perhaps of awe, for the woman whose husband's murder had been compassed by him—seemed to vibrate through the doctor, and communicated itself to the patient.

“The illness, I should suspect,” said Konigsmark, “is most in the mind ; but there is a slight fever, which, in these seasons, at Amsterdam, is common with those who are not natives of Holland ; and it is plain to perceive, from the elegant manner, that your ladyship (this he said bowing lowly to Lady Algernon) is from England. Birth, distinction, and manner, are easily recognised.”

Lady Algernon, although it was far from warm, used her fan, and a smile played upon the young cheek of her granddaughter.

“As the spring advances,” continued Konigsmark, “this fever becomes more prevalent, and is oftentimes the forerunner of ague ; the young escape the latter more frequently than those who have passed forty.” Konigsmark did not dare venture upon any word half so vulgar as that of “old.”

A sudden thought struck Lady Ogle that she might turn the doctor to advantage, whilst Lady

Algernon felt afraid that she might become the victim of that disagreeable disorder.

"It would be better, then," resumed Lady Ogle, "to remove from Amsterdam?"

"I should much counsel it, although I do not see any cause to warrant your apprehensions."

"I fear my grandmother is somewhat past forty," said Lady Ogle.

"I should not have surmised it," replied Konigsmark, with unblushing countenance.

It had been Lady Algernon's custom never to leave Lady Ogle in the presence of a stranger; she always felt she had charge of a prize every one was seeking to capture; but, upon this occasion, as doctors are privileged people, and as a little more rouge, with one or two extra *mouches*, might improve the countenance, the doctor was desired to discover the cause and degree of violence of the fever.

Lady Algernon walked in stately pride from the room, ever and anon turning to bow. Here she was outdone by Konigsmark, who kept his head bent lowly down, as if afraid to observe the starched Countess. On her reaching the door, she turned again, and both doctor and countess bowed, whilst Lady Ogle, removed from the sight of her grandmother, mimicked, in a stiff curtsy, and with a fan held to her face, the general manner of Lady Algernon.

Konigsmark had never been seated during this scene ; but Lady Ogle, as if relieved from a great weight by her grandmother's absence, immediately became natural, and desired the doctor to take a chair.

"I fear," began Lady Ogle, "the damp of this town have much injured Lady Algernon's health. She herself is not conscious of it, but to me it is painfully evident."

"Perhaps," said Konigsmark, (knowing his time would be short, without interruption,) "some recent family loss, as I perceive your ladyship is in deep mourning, might have occasioned the change?"

"The loss was nearer to me than to her."

"And doubtless occasioned this fever, which I hope may soon pass."

"It will pass sooner if I am removed from Amsterdam. A drier climate would be more beneficial than medicine."

"Paris is dry and salubrious. I have passed much time in that gay capital ; perhaps that would suit your ladyship's inclination?"

"It is the point at which I aim, but my grandmother is averse to it, and would return to England directly."

"I can urge it discreetly, for it would much benefit my patient."

"I should feel obliged by your so far making

my wishes accord with your own advice. This is a dull place, and even the common topics of the day seldom reach us. Traffic we see there is, to a great extent; but of intelligence which reaches the court, or events which, in other countries, much interest the public, we have little. What may there be, doctor, to animate the society of Amsterdam?"

"But little here; but there is arrived a man of much European note, the celebrated Count Konigsmark, he who was reported to have murdered one Thynne, a gentleman of fortune, in England."

"He never did it, doctor, neither did he conspire to do it; he was acquitted of the charge. Our monarch publicly expressed his satisfaction, and at Paris he was presented to the King by the English ambassador. I pray you contradict this scandal, which has no truth in it."

"It would be well for Count Konigsmark if he saw how anxiously he was defended by so beautiful a counsel."

"Do you know where the Count is lodged, and why he comes here?"

"It is reported that he took dispatches to the Princess —, whose husband holds a high military command with the army in Greece, and that he was desired to be in readiness to depart from Paris on the tenth day; that, being of a restless, inquisitive mind, he visited Amsterdam—the

With your lady of this murdered Englishman is here, they
on the way."

Then Lady Ogle, whose name she imagined had
saved her being known as the wife of Thynne,
was of all hues and complexions during this con-
versation, which the doctor marked, and rejoiced
to find that so far his disguise had favoured him,
that he had found the object of his future hopes
a strenuous believer of his innocence, and from
her manner evidently not ill-disposed towards
him.

"I am the widow of that unfortunate man,"
replied Lady Ogle.

"It would then be more advisable for you, in
whose grief I participate, to leave Amsterdam
directly. From your high situation, you might
meet, by accident, this Count Konigsmark."

"It would in no way disturb me. I knew the
Count in England, and am persuaded, firstly, by
the acquittal of the jury, secondly, by the King's
remark upon his innocence, and our ambassador
at Paris taking him to the court, that he must
be innocent. Moreover, he was of so gentle a
mind—so kind, so affable, so engaging, that I feel
assured the pulse of a murderer's heart never
beat in his bosom."

"Your ladyship views him with favourable
eyes. It is reported, if I can trust my memory,
that his object in disposing of your husband was
to obtain your hand; and, from your grand-

mother's remark, I attributed this slight fever, which is more obvious now than when I was first introduced, to the excitement which this strange adventure must have occasioned."

"Have you seen the Count, doctor?"

"Once this morning, if I am well informed."

"Did he look oppressed with care, or like one who feared to meet the public gaze?"

"On the contrary, he seemed to court it. Dressed in the uniform of the French chasseurs, his dress attracted notice, which he seemed not to heed."

"You will oblige me, doctor, by not mentioning this conversation on his arrival to Lady Algernon. I fear she is not much disposed to receive him courteously."

At this moment Lady Algernon entered, and the doctor bowed with respectful gravity.

"Have you prescribed for my granddaughter?"

"Physic," replied Konigsmark, with becoming wisdom, "would be of little benefit to the patient; I imagine her malady to arise from the climate of Amsterdam. We live here like amphibious animals, and agues and fevers are common in these months. I would counsel, under your ladyship's approval, a drier climate—some gentle exercise would be beneficial. With your permission, I will call again this evening."

Lady Algernon here tendered a fee, which Konigsmark refused, in a very dignified manner.

"I have done nothing in the doctor's art, madam," he replied; "nor can so common and so obvious a remark, that the climate is damp, be considered as medical advice." Konigsmark bowed more like a soldier than a doctor, and, making also a low reverence to Lady Ogle, retired.

"That doctor is unlike those of whom we read in Holland; he has more of the French manner than the Dutch," began Lady Algernon; "he evidently knows the distinctions of rank, and his courteous behaviour was most marked. What said he to you of your malady?"

"He declared me slightly feverish; but nothing to signify; expressing his apprehension that I might become indisposed if I remained much longer here; he spoke of Paris as a drier soil."

"There is no healthier spot in Europe than the high grounds of Petworth. It would ill become us, after your husband's murder by that ruffian Swede——"

"He never did it, grandmamma!" cried Lady Ogle, whilst her face became red with emotion.

"Ah!" remarked Lady Algernon, gravely; "you defend him vehemently. I pray Heaven

you may not be bewitched. I fear the very report that he murdered Mr. Thynne for the love of you, and to obtain your hand, has made you overlook the desperate deed in the object he had in view. Richard the Third, if I remember what my waiting-lady read to me, obtained a hand by the same means. We must go to England; there he will not dare show his face; and, before long, my child, you shall wear a ducal coronet. You start! Think you that I will again consent to your marriage with a plebeian or foreign adventurer, of good lineage it is true, but one who has stood at the bar of justice with his own menials, for a crime for which they were executed, and he only saved by the favour of the judge—the hangman wasted his time on the hirelings, whilst the master spirit escaped. Where is the pride of the Percies? Heavens save us! the heiress of that noble race would touch the hand of one who has been tried as a felon! Ah! I begin to see now why this idea of Paris is uppermost. I would wager my best jewel, that Montague has again made you a marketable commodity, and, as in the former case, sold, or will sell, you to Kontesmark. Go to your chamber, child; bid your lady read to you. I will desire preparation to be made for my journey, and will go this instant to my banker's.

Lady Algernon was alarmed; she saw in her

granddaughter's manner the certainty that her young heart was occupied with the thoughts of Konigsmark, and that she had already fixed upon him as her husband, whilst Lady Algernon had opened a communication with the Duke of Somerset; she was quite aware of Montague's duplicity, and the Countess of Northumberland's weakness, and resolved to avoid Paris, and retire at once to Petworth. She gave directions for instant preparations for departure, and, ordering her chair, left her house to pay some formal visit.

Konigsmark, on gaining the street, re-considered the conversation which had passed, and resolved, like all bold, adventurous lovers, to strike the iron while hot. He soon gained intelligence of the habits of Lady Algernon, and planted his servant to watch the door. The doctor's disguise was still considered by him as safest, although young eyes are more often dazzled by appearances; and uniforms, like peacocks' feathers, may blind the eager to the worth of that beneath.

"Well," argued Konigsmark, "the very idea of gaining admission in disguise had something romantic—something beyond the usual formal visit, heralded by servants, and of common occurrence—here was love prompting a device that seldom fails with the young and the ardent."

No sooner was Lady Algernon safe, than Ko-

nigsmark returned. Aware of every turn of the female mind, he entered, certain of conquest, and resolved to hazard all upon the minute. He found Lady Ogle sitting before the fire, with her eyes fixed upon it.

"Idle," said Konigsmark to himself; "then I am sure of success."

"I have returned sooner than was my intention, on account of my being obliged to leave Amsterdam to visit a patient, at some distance from the city, and also (here he looked cautiously around the room,) to intimate to your ladyship, that by hazard, being called in to a patient lodged at the Grand Hostel, I met the Count Konigsmark; he was making diligent inquiries of the abode of Lady Algernon, and seemed in much anxiety. From the retired habits of your grandmother, none knew of the address, and I thought, before I would supply the intelligence, I would know how far it would be consonant with your ladyship's feelings to receive him, in order thus to place you on your guard should you wish to avoid him, and to give him the requisite information, should you wish to welcome him. Allow me, madam, once again to feel your pulse. It has rather increased, and it has not the hard beat of fever."

"Did he look in good health, doctor? I pray you be seated."

“ With all the vivacity of youth and hope his face seemed flushed, his eyes animated, his manner eager. I have no doubt that he was in sound health.”

“ And did he make frequent inquiries for our residence ?”

“ To one I heard him offer much money for the discovery of the abode ; to another, he was lavish of his promises ; to a third, violent for his return without success ; and it seems to me that his only object in visiting Amsterdam was to discover your abode. It will be requisite, madam, that you take some effervescent draught, if the pulse continues so ; I will order it, with your permission, and have it sent directly. My time, alas ! is very short. Can I be the bearer of any message, or may I leave word with some of the servants of your abode ? I would mention to your grandmother, as in all respects it is my duty to do so, that your ladyship must be kept quiet, and free from all excitement.”

“ Lady Algernon is not at home, nor will she return for at least two hours ; and if it be not a case which requires the doctor’s art, even at this moment I would pray you to grant me a few minutes’ conversation.”

Konigsmark drew his chair close to his patient, and was seated.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Yours is a strange eventful history, Madam," said Konigsmark, as he again felt his patient's pulse ; "at your early age, to be twice married."

"My will has never been consulted. I read that princesses accept the hands of others they have never seen, and thus was I betrothed by my step-father to Lord Ogle ; and, on my side, the proposition was accepted by Lady Algernon. Before that event, I had seen Count Konigsmark."

"And of what character is this Count ?"

"He has a European reputation for bravery ; he delights in desperate deeds, fond of adventure, and withal he is kind and courteous ; before my marriage, he recounted deeds of his life, which made my infant eyes refuse to sleep."

"A man of that stamp would not hesitate to

visit you in some disguise, or boldly invade the door in uniform."

"He may feel somewhat doubtful of his reception since Mr. Thyane's murder; but, if he knew how honestly I acquit him of all participation in that event, he would not fear to present himself."

"Nor does he! I am Count Konigsmark."

Lady Ogle started from her seat. Konigsmark clasped her hand, and, in all the gallantry of that age, fell upon one knee, and impressed kiss after kiss upon the prize he held. Lady Ogle did not attempt to withdraw it; but she seemed scanning with cautious eye the features, until she became reassured, and with childish innocence, smiled.

Now was it that Konigsmark poured forth the tide of gratitude and flattery. Now did he vehemently assert that, from the moment he had seen her at Petworth until this hour, she had been the star of his destiny; that she had won his heart by her elegance, her beauty, and her goodness. With rapidity he skimmed the leading events of his life, and in all and everything but one object engrossed his mind, and that was the hope of one day possessing his dearly loved Elizabeth.

It was the first time in her life that Lady Ogle had ever heard the serpent tongue of love, and now she felt the sweet poison coursing

through all her blood, her face flushing, her hand trembling, and her lips moving, though not with speech. Twice had she been married; in form, never had she been loved. Now, no cold admirer sought by the influence of others to win her heart; no mercenary bridegroom grasped her wealth, and relinquished her hand; no cold speculator wedded her gold, and left her to the care of a grandmother. Now, she was herself the idol sought. No danger or difficulty could offer opposition to her lover—his eyes were fire, his words burning with passion, his manner eager and tender.

The poor child listened, as her eyes swam in moisture; she, the plaything of two husbands, the idol of one so renowned! The thought that the world suspected the man of a murder, that he stood at the bar of justice, associated with those who were hung for the deed—the strong corroborative evidence, which fastened upon the Count the certainty of his being accessory before the fact—ah! if all this had been pleaded in the strongest language of the most able advocate, not one word would Lady Ogle have believed. By her side, her hands clasped in his, his bold, untamed eye fixed upon hers, sat Konigsmark. Each word fell upon a willing ear, and all his assertions were believed, all his vows and promises credited. There was no one near to advise.

Lady Algernon was away, and the poor ladies, hired to read and sing, were regarded as mere automatons, beneath Lady Ogle in society, and, from their menial situation, improper persons for confidants.

What young heart could listen, and not be captivated? Where is the child who can distinguish between the warm assertion of words, and the true beating of the heart? The poor thing kept her eyes upon his, gazing with wonder and admiration upon the hero; her little frame trembled with unknown sensations, and in eagerness she answered every question asked with the warm affirmative. Having secured her heart, Konigsmark misdirected her mind.

"They report," he said, with a sneer, "I murdered Mr. Thynne. I could have killed him as being your husband, for I could not bear any man to stand between me and my object; but I am better known than to be suspected of cowardice. No; could I have met him in fair combat, each party attended by his friends, in the open field, with no advantage as to weapon, and no protection but in our skill and bravery, with Elizabeth as a reward for the conqueror, I would have hazarded this body, now sworn to be yours before a thousand Thynnes, and, trusting to my courage to win so rich a prize, I would have killed him a thousand times; but to assassi-

nate, to ride up to an unprotected, unsuspecting man, and basely shoot him without calling upon him to stand and account for himself, such thoughts never entered a Königsmark's mind."

"Heaven is my witness," said the trembling girl, "that no thought so derogatory to your honour ever entered this heart. In vain has Lady Algernon tried to make me believe you guilty. Montague's letter, my mother's letter, convinced me you were innocent, and I can give no better proof of my belief than in my present situation."

"Turn we to other subjects more consonant to our minds. Thus much I may add, that he whose fame has stood so high as my own, is not likely to tarnish it by murder. Lady Algernon is old, and those well versed in human nature know how difficult it is to efface any picture from the minds of persons advanced in years. Age is slow to take impressions, but, once taken, they are difficult to be erased. I would stand high in the estimation of all. I would not have one reproachful look from the humblest. I would walk through this life, if it were possible, with my heart bare, and with every thought and deed engraven on it; and then you would see how true is the love, how sincere the faith, how warm the affection, with which I devote myself to you; but I must not waste these precious moments in idle words.

By this kiss, imprinted upon those darling lips, I swear to love you, and by the breath which murmurs back your belief, I feel our love is reciprocal. Henceforward, the Countess Konigsmark shall not be a child, kept in vile durance, watched over by prying eyes, treated as an infant, and amused as a baby. No ; by my good sword, and plighted love, the Countess Konigsmark shall walk amongst the highest of the earth, and add new lustre to her husband's fame by the beauty—the matchless, peerless beauty—which adorns the bride. Before we may be surprised again, dear, beautiful girl, assure me of your love.”

“ Indeed—indeed, Count——”

“ Stop, dearest girl ; when love is once acknowledged, formality yields to affection. I would have you call me Charles, as I have already, in the glow of my ardour, called you Elizabeth.”

“ It seems so strange to me, Charles. I feel ashamed and afraid of calling you so. Do not, I pray you, think me impertinent ; the word comes already to my lips ; but bashfulness checks its utterance.”

“ The difficulty is overstepped the first time the name is pronounced. Once more, dearest Elizabeth, let me hear you say you love me.”

“ Indeed—indeed, Charles, I do.”

Warm and rapid were the kisses the Count imprinted upon her lips ; whilst the child's cheeks

flushed with an unusual colour. He held her in his arms, and looked and gazed upon her eyes. He was an arch hypocrite; but it was like the net which held the lion, enclosing a spaniel. All this was new to Lady Ogle. Her mind had never been tarnished by fulsome declarations, and was spotless to receive any impression. To her uninformed mind, no hero ever equalled Charles John Von Konigsmark. She was unhappy at home, for age and youth seldom well assimilate. She panted for freedom, and her liberator was near.

"Listen to me, Elizabeth, with your best attention. It is reasonable to think that those who have sold you twice will sell you a third time. When I am away, every one will conspire against me. You will have this foolish murder, with ghosts, bleeding from a thousand wounds, painted to frighten you. You will hear wonderful things of me, all derogatory to my character; but remember, not one person will approach you who will be allowed to speak of me fairly—every expression will be laden with an object—nothing will be properly stated; my fame, therefore, stands in much danger."

"I will not credit one word they say; they cannot control me now. I have given you my heart, and here is the hand ready to fulfil and ratify the vow."

"I count upon your devotion and your affection."

"You will not count in vain."

"In speaking of that nearest my heart, I omitted what is most requisite for you to know. The Grand Monarque asked me to command one of his regiments. I could not refuse so great an honour. He selected me to bear despatches to the Princess ———. I have to return to Paris in a given time, and to-night must leave Amsterdam; for three weeks is but a short time for making so long a journey. You are, I know, engaged to spend the spring and summer in Paris. Urge your grandmother to depart quickly for your stepfather's. Once there, our marriage is certain; to that point, my lovely angel, direct your constant view. I am well known to Montague, and there can present myself without fear of rebuke. My speed will be three times as great as yours, and by the time you are prepared to leave this city, I shall be on my return to Paris."

The unusual time which Lady Ogle had devoted to her doctor aroused the vigilant spirit of the Cerberus who watched her, and her cautious manner enabled her to open the door of the salon unobserved. Believing Lady Ogle might be asleep, and the doctor long since departed, she had adopted this silent approach; but her sur-

prise was great on beholding the Count with his arm round the waist of Lady Ogle, supporting her on his knee, and imprinting kisses upon kisses on her lips; and there he murmured his vows of love and affection—detailed his plan—spoke of their future union—and received the bold assurance that no time or slander should turn her from her promise. The lady shut the door, and, as the miserable handle was released, it made a slight noise.

Konigsmark was in an instant the doctor.

“The handle of the door turned!” said the Count.

“Why are you alarmed, Charles? you see no one is in the room; it was but your fancy.”

“My fancy seldom deceives me. Hark! there is a noise upon the staircase! Sit you by the fire; I will be all respect, and as cold as a Dutchman. How your cheeks flush, Elizabeth! One kiss more, my own dear, fondly loved, promised bride.” It was more than one kiss he gave and received; vows of constancy passed rapidly between them; and not until the handle moved—and Konigsmark kept his eyes fixed on it—did he withdraw his lips. Lady Algernon entered in much state. Two servants stood at the door, and bowed as she passed; and Konigsmark, assuming the gravity of his profession, bowed also with much respect.

"As I am obliged suddenly to leave Amsterdam," began the Count, "to visit a nobleman, whose situation is precarious, I ventured to re-visit my patient. There is a slight fever, nothing but what is common at Amsterdam, lurking about her. I would recommend your speedy departure—for your ladyship runs an equal hazard—and, without a sudden change, it may turn into ague. I have told Lady Ogle what course to pursue, and I hope she may honour me by following my advice."

"You need not fear it, doctor; I am an obedient patient."

The doctor bowed lowly. Lady Ogle, who was behind Lady Algernon, caught his eye as he raised his head; her face became crimson; nor did it lose its colour, when, at the last moment, one quick glance of the Count's bright, piercing eye conveyed a fond adieu.

"It is strange," said Lady Algernon, "but my poor memory assures me that I have seen that face before. Why, child, how you change colour! What is the matter?"

"Nothing, good grandmamma, but what the doctor said I should experience—a feverish flush one moment, and a shiver of ague the next. Pray God we may not both catch this cruel disorder, which clings to the sufferers for months."

"All is in readiness; the sooner we leave this

land of dykes and ditches the better. I verily believe I feel the fever myself."

Lady Ogle, glad to depart, hastened to her own room, but she was never permitted to taste of the luxury of retirement ; her companion was there, ready to read, to play, or to sing. Lady Ogle quite forgot her presence, and opened the window to catch the last look of her lover. He, who calculated all chances, had not left the street, but, from a distance, recognised the form, and waved his kerchief, which she returned. He then turned the corner, hastened to the hostel, and ten minutes afterwards was on board a vessel bound for the Morea.

"Lady Ogle," said the attendant, with a most unusual familiarity, "the cold air may somewhat, I hope, chill your convenient fever."

The young girl drew herself up, and, with an eye of astonishment, surveyed the hireling who dared to comment upon her indisposition.

"I can be as sincere a friend as I can be a determined enemy," remarked the attendant, who noticed this manifestation of pride. "I was in hopes my reading might have been useful to your ladyship. The mouse once assisted the lion, and the fox chopped the stork's head off."

"And pray, madam, what means this sudden recollection of fables? Do me the kindness to be seated, and, whilst my maid arranges my hair,

read to me. For that service, I believe, you are liberally rewarded."

Stung to the heart by the cold rebuke, the companion rose, and curtseying with mock gravity, remarked, "her duty also extended to protecting Lady Ogle from the advances of the murderer of her late husband, even if he came disguised as a doctor."

Willingly would Lady Ogle have unsaid her former remark ; but the door opened, and her servant entered, whilst at the same time the companion left the room. This was the creature of Lady Algernon, who detested Lady Ogle from her heart. She could not bear restraint and rebuke from one so young ; and Lady Ogle, in speaking to inferiors, had caught the manner of her grandmother, was harsh in her words, and had a certain superciliousness of behaviour which wounded the meek spirit of the menials. By Lady Algernon and Lady Ogle they were considered necessary evils, merely countenanced, because useful, but in no manner so placed as to warrant companionship or friendship. In leaving the room, she met Lady Algernon, who, in her pompous manner, desired that attention might be paid to Lady Ogle's wardrobe, and that preparations should be made for a speedy departure.

"It is the only thing, my Lady, that can save her," replied the young lady.

"Has her fever increased, or a shivering fit come on? If so, dispatch some one for the doctor. Ah! I remember; he has left Amsterdam for some noble patient."

"What doctor does your Ladyship allude to?"

Lady Algernon looked astonished, for she had never condescended to speak at such length to either of these companions, and certainly never countenanced so daring an insult as being asked a question. She sniffed with a certain disdain, as fashionable people may be seen to do who frequent, by accident, a church much resorted to by the poor, and without noticing the remark, walked on.

"The poor may sometimes be of service to the rich," murmured the girl to herself; "we are made convenience by them, and why should not I turn them who spurn me to my own advantage, or to the gratification of my own revenge? If I tell this old fool of Königsmark's visit, I shall oblige her, and at once relieve Lady Ogle from the fears she must have of me. I shall then have done my worst, and be discharged; if, on the contrary, I keep the secret, Lady Ogle must humble herself to me—I know that will sting her proud heart to the quick—and Lady Algernon will continue to favour the very plan she most wishes to thwart. The red-haired Lady Ogle shall never be told by me again of the beauty of her

auburn locks ; that will mortify her more than my hasty revenge."

In the meantime, preparations were actively made for a departure, but the companion confined her care to her own wardrobe ; and, instead of the demure look, the patient attention, and devoted subjection, a careless, independent air was assumed, with a presumption marvellously acquired in so short a time. Lady Ogle saw she had compromised herself, firstly, in the deception she had practised in receiving Konigsmark as a doctor ; and, secondly, by maintaining, in her last words, the belief that he was such.

Lady Algernon, who seldom consulted the opinion of any, believing that wisdom always accompanied rank and distinction, and that the poor only merited the appellation of rogues and fools, formed her own plans in secret, and carried them out with patient perseverance. The preparations for departure being completed, she directed her course to the Hague, and from the Hague to Rotterdam. Lady Ogle was as ignorant of the various routes to Paris as a child ; but on arriving at Rotterdam, she began to have some suspicion that her grandmother meditated a flight to England.

"Come hither, child," Lady Algernon said ; "I have much of import to communicate to you."

Lady Ogle imagined all was betrayed.

“ You flush, child ! I pray the fever may have passed. Listen ! of your two former marriages I disapproved—although Ogle’s was the least objectionable, on account of his rank. The immense wealth of all the Percies might claim a higher coronet ; indeed, child, every one should seek to ascend the ladder of life—it is easy enough to slip down,—I have, therefore, ever since Thynne was shot—and the King’s interference has given some enviable eclat to that business, and the Duke of Monmouth’s attendance at the execution is not to be overlooked—I have laboured to find you a suitable husband : six weeks have now elapsed—your grief is but nominal ; you should never redden your eyes for one who was so much below you in life—and I have, I think, procured you at last a most eligible match. Why start so ?—any one might be proud of the connexion ; and, by the Holy Cross, a prouder, or a man of nobler spirit does not exist than the Duke of Somerset. See, this letter contains the proposition ; it is written to me ; I told him that it would be received with a woman’s kindness.”

“ But, my dear Lady Algernon,” stammered the child, “ I would rather not be married—at least, to the Duke of Somerset.”

“ If I had consulted you, Lady Ogle,” re-

plied the Dowager, in her usual manner, "I might not have been offended. You must have mistaken my words! I have accepted the Duke of Somerset as your husband, and merely inform you of the fact. We leave this place for England to-morrow; in six weeks, you will be a duchess."

"But, my dear grandmamma——"

"Take no thought about it, child; I have written—the business is concluded."

"Stay, good grandmamma, only for a moment. I thought we were going to Paris."

"Indeed, child! and perhaps thought you would there meet Count Konigsmark." The silent companion now feeling that in six weeks her occupation would be gone, made a most low and reverential curtsy, and with consummate gravity, said, "Lady Ogle saw him at Amsterdam."

"What is this?" said the old lady, rising; and, before Lady Ogle could possibly interfere to stop the mischief, the slave had emancipated herself, and with pointed bitterness said, "The Dutch doctor was Count Konigsmark. I saw Lady Ogle upon his knee, and his arm round her waist." All the furies could scarcely have equalled Lady Algernon's features; she apparently thought little of the disguise, and the manner she had been deceived, but that

the last of the Percies should sit upon a Swedish count's knee, and that the arm of a suspected murderer should encircle her waist, was beyond human endurance. She most carefully arranged herself for an elegant attitude, and with consummate grace fainted on a sofa; but before she committed this weakness, she feebly articulated, "The last of the Percies on a man's knee! the glory is departed from the house! I faint! I faint! The last of the Percies! the last of the Percies! a man's knee!—a man's knee!"

The next morning they sailed for England.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE revenge of an insulted woman rankles until it is satisfied. That sex is patient under such sufferings, watching with caution until the moment arrives, and then, with unforgiving rancour, the bolt is shot.

The Countess of Northumberland led but a sorry life. Wrapt up in her husband—believing him the pride and ornament of every salon—envying every woman to whom he spoke—watching him in public, and for ever thinking of him in her solitude—she heard with dismay the chattering tongue of Scandal, which babbled of his many intrigues. Amongst the court party this was considered rather praiseworthy, and Montague not unfrequently was congratulated on his success, with much more sincerity than if had he achieved some general benefit for mankind ; but in the heart of the Countess of Northumberland,

grief—deep, sincere grief—was making a fearful inroad. When Montague was present, her beautiful eye flashed with animation ; and when, to lure him to his home, she used the most persuasive art of woman, she could not but read in her husband's countenance, that the evening passed in her society was considered so much of life lost—a sacrifice made to her request, not the gratification of his pleasure, or the result of his own inclination.

The Duchess of Cleveland had been fearfully insulted by the preference shown to her daughter by the Ambassador. She could not see her own waning charms—she could not imagine that the face which had captivated a monarch could yield to time, and fall beneath the unsparing hand of age. To find a rival in her own daughter moved the heart of this wretched woman to wreak her revenge first on the Ambassador, and secondly on his wife ; for the Countess of Northumberland never would receive the Duchess of Cleveland on the footing of friendship, but made the formal curtsy of constrained acquaintance.

“I would see the Countess of Northumberland,” said the Duchess, as she spoke from her carriage, having driven into the huge court.

“The Ambassadors does not receive, since the death of her son-in-law.”

“It is of great consequence,” resumed the

Duchess, "and imports her much to know. It may save her inconvenience."

"I will duly report your Grace's words," replied the bedizened servant.

"And add," resumed the Duchess, "that my interview will be of short duration; as I am aware her Excellency's time will be much employed after my visit." There was a bitterness in the words, which was unheeded by the man, paid to convey a message or to return one.

"What is this?" said Brett to the man, he having watched the proceedings from a small kind of entresol window, which overlooked the court, and which was the place chosen by Colonel Brett to superintend the establishment.

"The Duchess wishes to see her Excellency."

"Quite impossible," said Brett, who was fearful that something might accidentally be hinted about Lady Ogle's visit to Paris, or Konigsmark's probable return. "Tell her Grace, that the Ambassadors is particularly engaged; that she does not receive company to-day; that she is ill;—anything you like, only keep her out." But scarcely had Brett delivered himself of his words, when he heard his name from the Duchess, who, fixing upon him her beautiful dark eyes, which flashed with animation, remarked, "Pray, Colonel Brett, is the Duchess of Cleveland so little heeded by the Ambassadors, that she is to be

sent away unheard, whilst some poor servant has made the bearer of a falsehood? Mention to her Excellency, if you please, that I am here, and *must* see her."

"I pray you," said Brett, somewhat frightened at the Duchess's manner, and knowing of the intrigue of Montague with both mother and daughter—"I pray you to be cautious of any hasty communication. Would not your Grace first see the Ambassador? I have no doubt his Excellency will be pleased with so amiable a visitor."

"Thank you, Colonel Brett, for the care you would take of my character, especially if the Countess of Northumberland should find me tête-à-tête with her husband. My business is with the Countess. I pray you, do not waste more time, which is precious to us all, but announce me."

Finding there was no way of removing the Duchess, Brett hastened to apprise the Countess, but he was followed close, and as he entered, the Duchess entered also.

The Countess of Northumberland, who had heard every rumour which scandal, with its thousand tongues, circulated and increased, rose in a most dignified manner, and curtsied lowly to the Duchess, remarking, "how con-

cerned she was that her Grace had not been properly announced."

The Duchess of Cleveland answered the curtsy with one of equal hauteur, and it was evident two fairer enemies never met in the field—the Countess of Northumberland strong in her innocence of life and purity of conscience, the other swelling with newly-acquired power and panting for revenge.

The Countess of Northumberland was never guilty of a rudeness—she was reserved before the woman known to intrigue with her husband, and suspected of having purposely sacrificed her daughter. Still she was a Duchess, received at the court, and acknowledged by society. She pointed to a chair, which Brett placed, and directly afterwards this worthy coadjutor left the room to inform the Ambassador of the coming storm.

"Your Excellency——" he began.

"What, Brett?—what is the matter? Is the Count off his bargain? Why, man, you look disconcerted and pale."

"Ten thousand times worse! The Duchess of Cleveland has forced her way into the saloon, and is now with the Countess. She would not be refused admittance, and, from her manner, was towering with pride and insolence."

"The devil!" muttered Montague; "there is but one thing to be done—a third person must be in the room. Go, Brett—go. I will come directly. Lead the conversation about the court, or any scandal your fertile brain can invent. Go, Brett—go!"

The usual formalities in expressions were scarcely finished between the Duchess and the Ambassadors, the former having begun by expressing her horror of Mr. Thynne's murder, and condoled with the Ambassadors thereupon, before Brett returned, and, following up the theme, warmly condemned those who had endeavoured to fix the stain upon Count Konigsmark. This subject was particularly painful to the Countess, but Brett considered any pain preferable to a grand *éclaircissement* of the intrigues. He did his duty well, and Montague arrived apparently quite surprised to find the Duchess. He advanced with his usual courtesy of manner, but he was received with a stunning coldness.

"I am rather astonished, your Excellency, at your unusual kind manner," said the Duchess. "I scarcely anticipated so cordial a reception."

"I marvel why you should expect any other," replied the cool and wary Montague. "I trust in this house your Grace has ever been received as becomes your rank."

"But the painful circumstances under which

we last met might render the present visit one more of form than friendship. I come, as is my duty, to take leave of her Excellency."

"It is, then, your Grace's intention to leave Paris?" said the Countess, her beautiful face lighting up with the expression of hope.

"Nothing is farther from my intention; but it is a duty I owe to his Majesty's Ambassadors, after her kindness, so manifestly shown to me on various occasions, to take a formal leave on her Excellency's retiring from her proud situation."

"Your Grace, I see, is inclined to mirth. Perhaps you have heard it whispered—and a whisper in Paris soon becomes a loud voice—that her Excellency intended meeting her daughter and Lady Algernon somewhere between Amsterdam and Paris? There is no truth in the rumour, although nothing would be more natural."

"I once really thought of so doing," remarked the Countess, "but my health has latterly been such, that quiet was recommended, and thus my intention was abandoned. I grieve much your Grace should have allowed your kind civility and attention to have thus disturbed your morning's avocation."

"My duty to the wife of the King's representative prompted me. I thought it better to apprise your Excellency as early as possible of your departure, and this morning I received a

letter from the King, expressive of his royal displeasure at the conduct of Mr. Montague, and his determination to appoint a more fitting representative. The letter, Mr. Montague, which Colonel Brett left in the portfolio for the Countess of Sussex, written in your handwriting, I forwarded to the King; in that letter he read that his own daughter had fallen to his own ambassador. Nay, sir! I pray you interrupt me not for I am resolved to speak, and the Countess of Northumberland shall be undeceived in regard to yourself. The pursuit by night, when you endeavoured to gain my child's room, under my own roof, has also been made known to your sovereign. Nay, more—I will be frank with you in your opinion of his Majesty, revealed to me in divers conversations—his weakness as to the astrologer—the meeting at the house on the Versailles road—and every proof which could bring these charges home to you, are now in the King's possession. I learn that the new ambassador will arrive shortly, and I thought, rather than the Countess should receive the intelligence from a messenger, that it should come from the lips of one she had received so coldly and so formally, and that you, sir, should hear it from one you had insulted and betrayed. I wish your Excellency good-bye." Here she curtsied lowly, elegantly, and formally to the Countess, then,

turning to the Ambassador, she expressed a hope that his Majesty might overlook his transgressions, and that he might become penitent during his disgrace. Then, turning to Colonel Brett, she curtseyed in a dignified manner, and trusted he would find a better employment than conveying the love-letters of Mr. Montague. She then retired from the room. So astonished were all present, that not one had spoken a word.

No sooner had her Grace departed, than Brett sneaked out of the room. The Countess burst into a flood of tears, and Montague, who was of an excitable temper, paced like an enraged tiger in his cage. Often and often had Montague silenced his wife's reproaches by soothing her with soft words and sacred promises—now he stood undisguised. His monarch had his own note—the evidence was as clear as the sun at noonday—no subterfuge could avail him, no power could shelter him; and she who loved him with a woman's fondest affection, who had proved herself superior even to King Charles's seductive powers, who regarded her husband as a superior being, and who believed the many tales of scandal as mere court slander or gossip, now had the film removed from her eyes, and by the very person she had refused to countenance beyond the formal recognition of one admitted to the embassy—one whom she hated and despised

—but one who now had proved that her power was not lost over the man who raised her from plain Mrs. Palmer to the Duchess of Cleveland.

“I will not reproach you, Montague,” she began ; “I grieve that in my own house I was not protected from the insolence of that bad woman. The communication is too true, and I must try all my interest to soothe the monarch’s anger. We may yet be very happy in retirement. Away from this sink of abomination and crime, you may yet learn the value of true love and affection.” Here she again burst into tears, during which Montague left the room to pour out his wrath in the presence of Brett.

“This is too bad, Brett !” he began. “Think you I have nothing to overcome, when deprived of this most enviable situation ? My wife talks of the blessings of retirement, and the comforts of domestic love—As if Montague—the gay, aspiring Montague—could live in seclusion, find recreation in the planting of cabbages, or delight in the everlasting chirruping of sparrows.”

“Your Excellency——” began Brett.

“Hush ! Brett, and do not grate my ears with a title I never shall know again. Rely upon it my successor will not be a week after the messenger. This is too good a place for any one to loiter who is appointed to it. Besides this, all hope of Konigsmark’s marriage is at an end, for he would

not dare show himself in England ; the whole fabric of my ambition is blown to the ground by the cursed breath of that profligate woman."

Brett could not resist the smile which the last words occasioned.

"You smile, Brett ! By my faith, I believe already my face has forgotten that charm—look forward, and see what awaits me—I would wager the King's jewel to the value of the vilest thimble on a sempstress's finger, that when I leave Paris, that incarnate devil of a Duchess will waylay our equipages, and salute us with a patronizing air ; or write a letter to the King, and bid me present it. If it were not the arrantest folly to commit suicide, and thus lose my chance of revenge, I should not care how soon I was buried. Ruined ! and by the very woman who had wheedled from me the secret of my sovereign's weakness—the astrologer ; and then my wife, the virtuous, beautiful Countess, she who received this vile woman merely to gain or preserve the good opinion of the King—to find the very worm she almost crushed turn out the most powerful and most poisonous of serpents !—What's to be done, Brett ? Why do you stand gazing at the window, as if some marvellous bird were to bring you intelligence to the contrary of that already received ; what's to be done, I say ?"

"For my own part," replied Brett, "I am resolved upon the most desperate of all end-marriage."

"Marriage!" repeated Montague; "why man you must think our affairs more desperate than I do. Look you, Brett! I will forestal the King's intention—he shall not recal me—I will go without it. I will make a virtue of necessity, and resign; and, without waiting for a successor, leave Paris. Thus I will avoid the last insult of the Duchess; place the reason on the Countess's health—a wife is very often excessively useful as an excuse—draw up a resignation, dispatch it instantly, and, by the bright eyes of the Countess of Sussex, the ambitious Montague shall rise higher for this apparent fall. You, as the utmost desperation, fix on marriage—I will become a patriot. Write at once, Brett. I have turned the wheel of fortune before now, and soon the spoke now the lowest shall be the highest. Say nothing of my intentions; write the dispatch, and I will leave Paris within forty-eight hours."

"I presume your Excellency is already a convert to the Countess's opinion, and will retire to the country."

"No—no, Brett! I will yet arrange something with the Grand Monarque, which shall shake the power of any opposed to me. A patriot, Brett; rely upon it, no one is as popular as a patriot."

“For an hour or so, I believe it ; but afterwards some other bubble amuses the public, and then the first becomes the last.”

“It is because they know not when to leave the stage, and remain until they are hissed off. I must prepare the Countess for this journey ;—set you to work about the dispatch, and, as I told you, make the Countess’s health the pretext.”

“The King might think, from what he has heard, that your Excellency would rather rejoice at being freed from the surveillance of your wife.”

“And might know that I would not trust her in England, near the person of his Majesty, without a sufficient protection. I begin to rust from inactivity—this reverse of fortune has spurred me to a higher mettle ; and I mistake my powers and my influence, both at the French and English court, if I cannot rise superior to the misfortune. Firstly, I will keep back the King’s pension.”

“It will somewhat replace the sum already counted sure by the marriage of Lady Elizabeth.”

“Ah ! that is a hard blow ! The Swede would have paid high to have wiped out the supposed stain of murder by a marriage with the widow. He has, before this, seen her—he is no dangler—

no loiterer in the affair of love. A man who could plan the destruction of a husband will not be scared by the starch appearance of Lady Algernon. No ! the very difficulty to be overcome will make him the more desperate in the attack."

Montague soon persuaded his wife to make the preparations for her journey, and gladly did the Countess calculate the hours after which she should possess the undivided love of her husband—for this she would sacrifice anything—and, although now the frailties of the Ambassador could no longer be doubted—although, for the last year, his life had been one continued deceit—and although Montague had done all that a man could do to forfeit the esteem of his wife—yet did she love him most fondly ; and now again, for the fiftieth time, sued to him for forgiveness, accused herself of having neglected him, and strove, whenever the fit of ill-humour brooded over his countenance, to soothe him by her kindness. She was nature's fairest model ; she had resisted all attacks, from her own monarch to the frequenter of her salons ; she had been admired, assailed, but never wavered in her love for Montague, and seemed to value life less than his love. Led by every reasoning of her husband, for she believed him the most talented of men, she had herself forwarded the

affair of the Countess of Sussex by the frequency of her invitations ; and even the Duchess was somewhat more than commonly received at the instigation of Montague, and the arguments he adduced in order to retain his sovereign's confidence."

"It would be well, my dear!" said Montague, with a honeyed affection, "if we could leave without our departure being known."

"It will be difficult, I fear, my dear Montague, as you must take formal leave of the King."

"I can do that at the last moment. I can be hurried to England on important business—anything, rather than see again the revengeful glance of self-satisfied pride which blazed from that mushroom Duchess."

"And save me—save me, Montague, from the apparent innocent look of the Countess of Sussex. Our preparations need be very few ; I can leave my servant here to act under Colonel Brett's direction ; and I fear not to say, that I shall leave this grave of my happiness with less regret, since I leave that man behind me."

"You misjudge Brett, my dear ; indeed you do. He acts but under authority."

"The words of the Duchess are still sounding in my ears, 'Do you, Colonel Brett, find a better employment than conveying the love-letters of Mr.

Montague.' Let us not talk of him : enough for me, that I leave behind me all I most despise and hate, to journey with my husband. Come, come, Montague, cheer up a little ; you shall hear no word of reproach from me ; had I been kinder, or gayer—had I taken part in the court amusements, instead of shutting myself up like a state prisoner—had I been more of a companion, and conformed more to the manners and customs of this metropolis, you would not have been driven to the society of those, who, after you had upheld them, have turned to work your downfall."

It was thus this excellent woman, who had received so severe a shock from the discovery of Montague's intrigue with both the parent and the child, that she gradually sunk under it, turned all her attentions to her worthless husband, and endeavoured by every means to soothe his fretful humours. She was not destined long to be his partner, and the idea which most tended to hasten her death was, that her husband would not long grieve over her loss ; in short, she felt that her forgiveness was rather more hateful than if she had loudly proclaimed his infamy.

Within three days, Montague and the Countess left Paris. The Duchess of Cleveland was not to be balked of her revenge ; she had bribed the porter, ascertained the hour of the departure,

and, as the carriage of the Countess drove up the Boulevards, and turned towards the Barriere St. Denis, she drove up to it, and desired the Countess to present her compliments to the King, and to assure him that she had only omitted to write, because she was well aware his Majesty's late Ambassador would not scruple to open her letters, as he had invariably done all she had entrusted to his care.

CHAPTER XX.

ISABELLA and her father had travelled for several months, and were now staying at —, near the seat of war in Greece, which was attracting many distinguished persons, either as adventurers or spectators. The wealth of the Count had procured him a favourable reception everywhere, and the beauty of his daughter had attracted universal admiration ; but he had not left Italy without catching the breath of a thousand reports about the discovery of his child, and many parts of her early life. This had determined him, for her sake, to leave his country until curiosity should be satiated and scandal satisfied.

It was his intention to place his daughter, if possible, about the person of some royal princess, to return to Italy without her, and, after a lapse of some time, to recall her from a palace, which would silence all remarks and hints that were

for ever mingled with the name of Vergani the smuggler.

The Princess ——— was the centre of attraction in the pretty town in which she was staying. Her husband held a high command in the army, and his wife was one of those high-born beauties, who, at the period we are illustrating, were remarkable for their gallantries. At a party given by the Princess, Isabella had been presented. The striking beauty of the latter won her many admirers; she was exactly the contrary to the Princess, and yet both were pre-eminently beautiful. The dark flashing fiery eyes of Isabella, her beautifully chiselled features, resembling a living cameo, her elegant figure, her animated expressive manner, were all in contradistinction to the fair-haired, blue-eyed meek, modest-looking Princess; and in an instant the latter seemed much prepossessed in favour of the Italian, whose father the Princess condescended to notice in a marked and favoured manner. Isabella's bashful behaviour attracted also the observation of the Princess. She answered all questions with a timid modesty—the result of a conscious inferiority. It was her first appearance at a regal party, and, moreover, she could not divest herself of the belief that she was a marked object in the society; she attributed to the probable circulation of the wonderful events of her early life

that observation which she would have avoided, and never once imagined that her transcendent beauty could have occasioned the disagreeable notice to which she was subjected.

In her mind and in her memory was only one deeply engraven image—that of Konigsmark. In vain had she endeavoured to discover his abode. No tidings had ever reached her ears of the perfidious lover, who risked his life in the sea rather than continue by the side of her who fondly, deeply adored him. Isabella had endeavoured to conceal from herself the true cause of his desertion ; she only remembered the vigilance used through Konigsmark's means to restore her to her family. She sat in that crowded ball-room the admiration of every one present, but her heart was far away. Her memory had a thousand times recalled the desperate bull-fight, and she wondered at her own conduct when she courageously thrust the dagger in the brute's heart, and rescued her lover from death. It was a strange event ; but she never had laid aside the weapon which had preserved him,—it was a gift from his own hand, bought at Madrid,—and every night when she laid her head on her pillow she kissed the blade with as much sincerity as a good Catholic would kiss a relic. She was unconscious to all around her, when suddenly she overheard an officer who, in a hasty commu-

nication with the Princess, mentioned the name of Konigsmark. Her eye brightened into flame, her ears stood out like those of a dog when a strange footfall strikes upon his ear, and she overheard the following :—

“ He is sent by the Grand Monarque, and desires an interview, at your Highness’s leisure.”

“ The purport of this message ?”

“ I am uninformed, your Highness. I believe it is a sealed communication, to be delivered into your own hand.”

“ Bid him a hearty welcome, and, if not over-fatigued, say we shall be pleased with his company here. If, however, he would rather repose, see that he be well provided with all requisite comforts, and give orders that he be liberally supplied. I dedicate this night to the amusement of those around me ; let to-morrow, at noon, be fixed for his audience.”

The Chamberlain bowed and retired.

The Princess then turned towards Isabella, and took a seat by her side. She immediately rose.

“ Be seated, Mademoiselle. I have a communication to make to you, which might materially alter your future life. You are young—of my own age ; lively, I am sure, although apparently melancholy, even in this gay scene. That is occasioned merely by your not having found many acquaintances, although, to judge by the looks of

those around, you have won many hearts. Why have you not danced?"

"I am but indifferently instructed in that art," Isabella replied, "and in the presence of so much grace and beauty I fear to be awkward." Although etiquette would have desired the Italian to listen with attention to her Highness, her eyes were turned to the door through which the Chamberlain had passed; it was attributed to modesty.

"I have spoken with your father, who mentions his intentions of visiting many towns in our vicinity before his return to Italy. I have asked him to allow you to remain attached to my household until his return, and I trust the invitation will not be refused by you."

A sudden flush covered the cheeks of the Italian. It was her heart's wish to remain. She had caught enough of the Chamberlain's communication to believe that Konigsmark was near; and the Princess might have observed an eagerness to accept the invitation, which the most modest would have hesitated to answer, but would have bowed in assent, whilst they acknowledged the honour conferred upon them.

"Then I shall mention to your father that we have arranged this matter. A crowded court, with all its amusements, is more alluring than galleries of old Dutch paintings; and I dare

affirm the living picture is as welcome to you as the dull, brown, heavy, starched appearance of an old burgomaster on canvass."

The Princess made her remarks, with all the tone of a friend, in a gay communicative manner, and scarcely heeded the look of disappointment when the Chamberlain returned to the room without the visitor.

"The Count, your Highness, has availed himself of your permission to retire to rest. He has ridden hard since he left Versailles, and appears much fatigued."

"My Lord Chamberlain, my young friend here, who becomes attached to our court, has not danced to-night. I pray you select her a partner worthy of her beauty."

"Your Highness imposes a most difficult task. I scarcely believe it possible to obey the order."

The Princess smiled, Isabella blushed, and the Chamberlain gave a melting look indicative of the palpitation of his own heart.

"I pray your Highness to excuse me," said Isabella; "I would not disgrace your court by showing how awkward a lady it has been your highness's misfortune to select; besides, I have never learned this dance, and am ignorant of its measure."

"This modesty," replied the Princess, "is

misplaced ; but we allow you the privilege of the stranger for to-night. I will give orders for your reception to-morrow, and by noon I shall expect you."

The Princess rose, and left Isabella grateful for her release ; but the place was soon occupied by her father, who a thousand times congratulated her on the good fortune which attended her, and poured into the inattentive ear of his daughter lessons of court etiquette, the manner of addressing the Princess, and gave a careful warning to avoid exciting her Royal Highness's envy or jealousy. " She is of a light disposition," continued the Count, " and has a certain levity of look which even royalty cannot conceal. Human nature speaks out in spite of her restraint. Now, it is possible that your eyes may attract the person on whom hers are fixed—beware of that ; and also be careful never to see what it is wished you should not see. A person attached to a court should be deaf, dumb, and blind, excepting when required by the highest personage to listen, talk, and see. On such occasions, the sorrowful heart must feign a smile, and the low in spirits assume a vivacity of expression. A royal personage lives in an atmosphere of flattery—the freshening breeze of truth never disturbs the air—all who walk around the shrine are living specimens of accomplished deceit—to speak

an unpalatable truth is to hazard an enviable situation. You require this warning—you are entering on a new career. Henceforth you must see with the eyes of the Princess, and frame every answer in accordance with the wish of the questioner ; the habit is soon learned. Deceit in a court is as requisite as decent and becoming garments ; and when even advice is tendered it is wrapped in a garb of flattery, as children take bitter medicines in sweet jellies. Above all, take care of your heart, and fortify it against all attacks, by not crediting one word which courtiers address to you."

"My heart is quite safe," replied Isabella ; "I do not fear its wavering. I am tired, dear father, of this scene of amusement, to which I am so little accustomed. Let me beg of you to return home."

A night of feverish agitation was passed by Isabella. The deeply engraven figure of Konigsmark seemed more idelibly impressed upon her heart—he was the only man she had ever loved. She had seen him hailed as a victor, and courted as a champion, and these have charms for women. If, as Johnson says, "a nobleman comes as an author, ready booted and spurred," so does a hero into the arena of love, cased in armour and sure of conquest. Isabella had never heard one rumour against his character—she had never seen

this idol of her heart standing at the bar of justice, branded with all the suspicion of being a murderer, and, although acquitted, known to have been guilty. Now the brightest hope of her life might be realized—she was an heiress of great wealth—of high family—acknowledged by all, and admired by thousands; and in a few hours she should see him again, and claim from him the ten thousand promises he had made. To sleep was impossible—hers was a waking dream of future happiness, of redoubled love and affection.

In the mean time, Konigsmark had inquired of those around him concerning the Princess —; and very far from thinking of Isabella, his thoughts recurred only to the star of his destiny; she had desired him to perform his mission, and then her hand should be his.

With more than usual care Konigsmark dressed himself for the interview: the Princess was young, and first impressions are seldom entirely erased; his fame was European—his guilt confined alone to England—the very circumstance of his serving in the French army, and of being entrusted with a special mission from Louis XIV., was a guarantee for his respectability; all the good he had done was acknowledged—the crime was discredited.

“I am desired,” said the Count, as he bowed

lowly to the Princess, "to place this communication into your Highness's hand;" he raised his eyes respectfully, and caught the glance of those of the Princess — ; there was a strange expression in them, and a slight flush suffused her cheeks; she was pleased to say, "That his Majesty of France could not have sent a more welcome messenger, or one to whom Christianity in general was more indebted."

"I am desired to await your Highness's orders, and to return to France with the answer to that dispatch."

"The fatigue you have undergone will make some trifling rest requisite." During the conversation which ensued, Konigsmark was aware of secret kindness in each expression; and there was also a melting softness in the eyes, which seemed to speak a tender heart and kind disposition. Konigsmark's look was that of a brave and resolute man, and yet, so well managed, that he appeared to shrink, as if dazzled by the glance of the Princess: he was an adept—it was the merest acting—for the Swede never felt any emotion of the heart, which was as insensible to fear as to love; but he knew well when another felt the secret trembling of dismay, or the tender vibration of affection.

"I fear," said the Princess, "it will be some time before I can prepare the answer to this dis-

patch. Did his Majesty appear very anxious for your return ?”

“ I was desired to wait your Highness’s pleasure.”

“ Some days must elapse before your return to France ; you are, therefore, master of your time for at least a week ; your abode is at your pleasure in this palace. My Lord Chamberlain, see that the Count Konigsmark wants for nothing.”

The Count made a very low bow, and again, on raising his head, observed the fixed glance of the Princess.

He was not long in discovering that Isabella was in the same house, and their joy at meeting each other appeared to be mutual.

“ Can it be,” said Konigsmark, as he pressed Isabella to his heart, “ that again I hold you in my arms, and imprint this kiss upon your lips ? You thought it cruel, my angel, that I should have left you at Barcelona, and no doubt imagined ten thousand infidelities. I knew that Vergani could restore you to your parent ; had I been with you, my love would have prevented such a desirable end, for then I could not have left you, and my presence would have marred your reputation. It was a powerful struggle between love and duty, and I am now well pleased that the latter prevailed.”

Isabella believed every word—she would have

believed him had he declared himself capable of carrying the sun in his left hand. Let but a woman love, and she is as blind to any truth, which is detrimental to her lover's character, as she is credulous of any favourable report.

"And now, dear Charles, how long am I to wait before I am your wife?"

"Ah, that is a question which, if my good intention and impatience could answer, would be easily resolved—this hour; but, alas! my sweetest spoilt pet child, there are difficulties even to lovers and heroes to be surmounted! You are a Catholic—I, a Protestant; the Pope might overcome his repugnance to this alliance, in consideration of my former services; but it will require time, and we must endeavour to obtain much influence before we approach his Holiness."

"I have no religion, but your religion—no love, but your love; the man who is to guide me through life shall instruct me in my prayers. I will have no priest but the one enshrined in my heart. I am ready to be your wife, here is my hand. I fear no Pope or anathema of excommunication, but from you."

"Nor I, Isabella!—I fear no Pope; but how are we to find a man to read over the ceremony? A Protestant would not unite me to a

Catholic ; and a Catholic dare not unite you to a Protestant."

"It is an evasion, Charles. I am no Catholic."

"Did not your father take you to the church? Did not he force you to the confessional?"

"At that confession I accused myself of nothing, but of my deep, unalterable love for you."

"And how many aves were you condemned to say?"

"I threw the bauble of beads from me, and repeated your words when we sat on the deck of the felucca, and before the wind disturbed our nuptial bed."

"We will see about the marriage instantly," said Konigsmark. "I will mention it to the Princess, and get her to interest herself in our union ; but it is almost a pity such romantic love should close in a marriage." He left the room, but the last words were not hastily forgotten.

"Relate to me," said the Princess — to Konigsmark, "some of the stirring scenes of your life. For one so young, you have seen much ; and the world is loud concerning your adventures."

The Count and the Princess were alone in the

small boudoir, which was forbidden to all but those specially invited ; here the ladies of the court never entered ; from it was the sleeping-chamber of the Princess. History has made mention of secret trap-doors beneath these apartments, and has also unfolded some of the dark scenes which were enacted in those apparently luxurious rooms. The very circumstance of the Princess — being alone with Konigsmark, must convince the reader that again had the Swede triumphed—that another victim had been added to the long list of his conquests.

Konigsmark would gladly have obtained Isabella's removal, but the excessive jealousy of the Princess deterred him from ever mentioning her name, for her beauty had obtained the voice of a thousand tongues, and her affability and modesty had obtained her many friends. She favoured none, but was civil and courteous to all. Had Konigsmark attempted to interest himself in her removal, or in anything conducive to her welfare, the Princess's jealousy would have been aroused ; and she, under the appearance of mildness and meekness, was revengeful and cruel.

Konigsmark was now her favourite ; he passed hours with her, under the pretence of assisting her in her private dispatch to the King ; and Isabella watched, with an aching heart, for the few minutes devoted to her, which every day

grew less and less, and which sometimes betrayed a haste and capriciousness of temper never before manifested. She never could attribute this to anything but the press of business—she would not believe his affections changed—she made ten thousand excuses ; but she felt only as a confiding woman, awakened to suspicion, can feel ; still she was consoled, for every minute which Konigsmark devoted to her was spent by the wary Swede in expressions of love.

“The promises of Konigsmark are always sacred,” said the Count, to Isabella, as she again mentioned the marriage.

“And the delay is ever the same,” replied Isabella. “I would not upbraid you, but how can I see your attention to the Princess, and remark the speaking communication of the eyes without suspicion ? It is because I believe you above all other men in daring, that I fear your constancy ; and I could forgive the woman—for that would somewhat palliate my crime—who won you to her heart. I could never pardon you for the infidelity to myself.”

“Beautiful Isabella,” said Konigsmark, “look at that mirror, and tell me what other beauty could supplant you.”

“We never cherish what we possess, so much as that which is withheld from us, else, why are your hours devoted to another, when I await

with anxiety your arrival, and bless you when you come ?”

“ Ever—ever suspicious, Isabella !”

“ Have I not cause, Charles ? When you come to me, it seems a moment wrung from another, rather than devoted to myself. Look, Charles, at this ! I wear it ever by my side : it saved your life, and will, perhaps, rid you of mine ; but it shall rid me of a rival, before it shall be warmed in my own heart.”

“ Put up that poniard, Isabella. What would the Princess say, if she saw you with that weapon ?”

“ She would say, that no pious man worshipped a relic with half the fervency and devotion which I pay to this dagger, that saved your life. Now, let me but retain your love, and the devotion is a million-fold increased.”

“ And you love me now more than ever ?”

“ Ten thousand times ! I loved you at first, for your kindness in rescuing me from the Turks, and afterwards from Vratz. Ah, how pale you are !”

“ It is nothing ! Continue, dearest, to tell me of that most in accordance with my wishes.”

“ I loved you afterwards for yourself ; your brave deeds made you an idol which I worshipped, nor has my devotion decreased ; I love you with all the passion of an Italian.” Ko-

nigsmark raised his eyes, and saw the Princess at the door, she had overheard every sentence ; and, fearful lest the words of the dark-eyed Italian should win back the heart she imagined devoted to herself, entered the room. There was an air of haughty disdain, and, after glancing with a look of hatred at Isabella, she coolly said, "Count Konigsmark, you will leave here to-morrow morning for Paris ; in one hour attend me in my boudoir for your secret instructions. I have some occupation for you," she continued, addressing Isabella, "which will occupy your time until your father's return. I marvel that he left one so unprotected in such dangerous company." Isabella rose, and followed her.

"Ah !" sighed Konigsmark, "when will my evil genius leave me !" He started as he imagined he felt a pressure from the ring. The Princess is jealous. Isabella is jealous, and the star of my destiny, perhaps, disgusted with my absence, is forming a new marriage ; but to-morrow I shall be free from all trammels. How strange it is that, whenever I put my hands in my pockets, this prophecy of Vratz's comes forth. I can have little to fear now, since she to whom it obviously alludes is far away."

It was midnight. From ten o'clock had the Count been entertained in the secret boudoir of

the Princess. Here no human voice penetrated, —no eye could see—no ear be gratified, excepting those within its precincts. It was a room dedicated to love. Here the warm whispers fell on ready ears. Here the quick lightning of the eye conveyed the expression which the tongue might have faltered in uttering, and here were spread those luxuries which heat the blood and inspire confidence.

From the moment that Isabella had been dismissed, she became aware of the fatal rivalry of the Princess. With anxious step she traversed the long corridor which separated the boudoir from the other apartments. The page on duty left his post, in order to gratify his companions with the assurance that they had time for amusement, as the Count was with her highness, and orders had been given for no one to be allowed to enter. Isabella softly crept to the door, and then, ashamed of playing the spy, retreated to the nearer pillar, behind which she waited, resolved to see Konigsmark before his departure, and once again declare her unbounded love. One o'clock resounded through the long hall, and then there came all the solemn silence of the night. The moon shone through the painted glass, giving a curious and kind of church-like melancholy to the scene. Two o'clock, and the door of the

boudoir opened. The Princess looked along the corridor, whilst Isabella, concealed behind the pillar, felt her heart beat strangely.

"There is no one, dearest Charles," she said, "and now one—one long kiss before we part. Your return will be within a fortnight. The King must answer the letter, and you will be the bearer; in the mean time, no other person shall be here to mar our pleasures." The Princess left the door open, and returned to take the last parting from the object of her affection. She threw her arms around him, and clasped him, weeping, to her heart. "I do not ask you to use despatch," she said, "I am too well convinced of the ardour of your love. How long—how very long it will be before we meet again!"

"I will not loiter on the road. With such a Princess for my ruler, and such a sovereign of my heart, I cannot long delay my return to the only object of my love."

"You loved the Italian, Charles?"

"Never—never! She was a woman chance threw in my way—one sufficiently enticing to be a companion of some leisure hours, and one who, having fallen, would regain her position by a marriage. The kindness due to a handsome woman, she has experienced; but love—such as I feel for you—devotion, affection, all that engrosses the human heart, and makes life a day of joy,

she never had from me. With you, I treasure every moment ; with her, it is a lingering hour, which seems like a sun-setting shadow, fifty times longer than the substance."

"Then I may rest assured that no other shares your love?"

"I swear by those dear blue eyes, now moistening in tears, no other shall ever share my love!" Konigsmark encircled her in his arms, and, when he impressed his last warm kiss upon her lips, Isabella approached him as he raised his head from the embrace. The Princess saw the intruder—she shrieked. Konigsmark turned suddenly, clasp ing his sword, and fell a corpse at the feet of the Princess. He lingered sufficiently long to hear—"The dagger which saved has reached the perfidious heart; the hand which was degraded has taken its own revenge; and now, whilst the craven-hearted Princess has fainted, I will kiss those cold lips, and seize that which never left the hand." She fell upon the corpse and imprinted a thousand kisses, when, seeing the Princess move, she seized his hand in order to withdraw the iron ring—it was gone.

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